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Volume 133 Number 1



# PMLA

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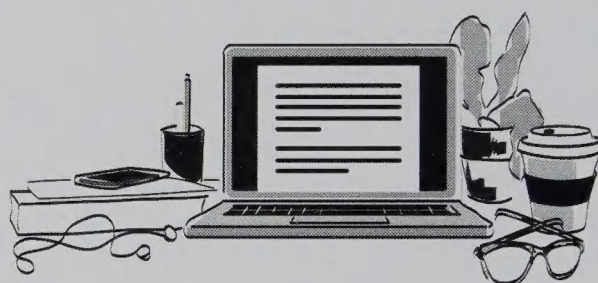
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January 2018  
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# PMLA

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Published five times a year by the association

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ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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## Submitting Manuscripts to *PMLA*

### Editorial Policy for Essays

*PMLA* welcomes essays of interest to those concerned with the study of language and literature. As the publication of a large and heterogeneous association, the journal is receptive to a variety of topics, whether general or specific, and to all scholarly methods and theoretical perspectives. The ideal *PMLA* essay exemplifies the best of its kind, whatever the kind; addresses a significant problem; draws out clearly the implications of its findings; and engages the attention of its audience through a concise, readable presentation.

### Eligibility

To be eligible for review, manuscripts must meet the following requirements:

**MLA membership.** Authors must be members of the MLA. (For a collaboratively written essay to be eligible for review, all coauthors must be members of the MLA.)

**Author anonymity.** Authors should not refer to themselves in the first person in the submitted text or notes if such references would identify them; any necessary references to the author's previous work, for example, should be in the third person.

**Word length.** Articles must be between 6,000 and 9,000 words. The word count includes discursive notes but excludes works-cited lists and translations.

**Originality.** Articles cannot have been previously published in any language. An article is considered previously published if it appears in print or in an online outlet with the traits of publication, such as editorial selection of content, a formal presentation, and ongoing availability. Online contexts that typically lack these traits include personal Web pages, discussion groups, and repositories.

**Exclusive submission.** Articles cannot be under consideration by other journals or publishers. An article found to have been simultaneously submitted elsewhere will not be published in *PMLA* even if it has already been accepted for publication by the Editorial Board.

**Language.** Manuscripts in languages other than English must be accompanied by a detailed summary in English (generally of 1,000–1,500 words) and must be translated into English if they are recommended to the Editorial Board. Translations should accompany all foreign language quotations.

**Scope.** *PMLA* does not publish book reviews or new works of fiction. Submissions should be broadly of interest to those concerned with the study of language and literature.

**Quality.** *PMLA* publishes the best of its kind. Works that demonstrate egregious signs of poor quality (e.g., lack of scholarly apparatus when relevant, evidence of extreme carelessness in preparation) cannot be sent for review.

### Forthcoming in *PMLA*

#### IN THE MARCH ISSUE

"Editor's Column—Historicism, Presentism, Futurism"

RACHEL BUURMA AND LAURA

HEFFERNAN. "The Classroom in the Canon: T. S. Eliot's Modern English Literature Tutorial and *The Sacred Wood*"

KARA GASTON. "Forms and Celestial Motion in Chaucer's *Complaint of Mars*"

RICARDO MATTHEWS. "Song in Reverse: The Medieval Prosimetrum and Lyric Theory"

KAREN HADLEY. "Blake's *Visions* and the Biopolitical Unconscious"

MICHAEL TONDRE. "The Impassive Novel: 'Brain-Building' in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*"

JULIA ELSKY. "Rereading Ionesco's *Bald Soprano*: Interlingual Exchange and Language Manuals from Vichy to the Postwar Era"

#### Criticism in Translation

IBRAHIM YOUNISI. "Two Themes in *Bleak House*." Introduction and translation by Sina Rahmani

#### Little-Known Documents

ANNA MENDELSSOHN. *What a Performance*. Introduction by Sara Crangle

#### Theories and Methodologies

On Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer*, *The Refugees*, and *Nothing Ever Dies*. Essays by Sarah Chihaya, Sylvia Chong, Yogita Goyal, Yunte Huang, Anjali Prabhu, Caroline M. Rody, Min Hyoung Song, Ben Vu Tran, and Sunny Xiang; response by Viet Thanh Nguyen

## Forthcoming in PMLA

### IN OTHER ISSUES

ALISON MARGARET BIGELOW.

"Transatlantic Quechuañol: Reading Race through Colonial Translations"

BETH BLUM. "The Self-Help Hermeneutic: Its Global History and Literary Future"

MICHAELA BRONSTEIN. "Taking the Future into Account: Today's Novels for Tomorrow's Readers"

MIKE CHASAR. "Ghosts of American Literature: Receiving, Reading, and Interleaving Edna St. Vincent Mil- lay's *The Murder of Lidice*"

ALICIA CHRISTOFF. "Margaret and the Victorians"

JULIE CYZEWSKI. "Broadcasting Nature Poetry: Una Marson and the BBC's Overseas Service"

KATHERINE FUSCO. "Sexing Farina: *Our Gang's* Episodes of Racial Childhood"

EDGAR GARCIA. "Pictography, Law, and Earth: Gerald Vizenor, John Borrows, and Louise Erdrich"

N. KATHERINE HAYLES. "Human and Machine Cultures of Reading: A Cognitive Assemblage Approach"

JAMES HEFFERNAN. "Reading Pictures"

LAURA E. HELTON. "On Decimals, Catalogs, and Racial Imaginaries of Reading"

BARBARA HOCHMAN. "Filling in Blanks: Nella Larsen's Application to Library School"

KAMRAN JAVADIZADEH. "The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads: Claudia Rankine, Robert Lowell, and the Whiteness of the Lyric Subject"

KIMBERLY JOHNSON. "Linear Perspective and the Renaissance Lyric"

JAMISON KANTOR. "Immortality, Romanticism, and the Limit of the Liberal Imagination"

ANNABEL L. KIM. "Infiltrating Autofiction: Disappearing the Subject in Anne Garréta's *Pas un jour*"

BENJAMIN MANGRUM. "Aggregation, Public Criticism, and the History of Reading 'Big Data'"

JOSEPH MANSKY. "'Look No More': Jonson's *Catiline* and the Politics of *Enargeia*"

(continued)

### Submission Procedures

**MLA style.** Manuscripts should follow MLA style as set out in the most recent edition of the *MLA Handbook*. The MLA urges its contributors to be sensitive to the social implications of language and to seek wording free of discriminatory overtones.

**Cover sheet.** Authors' names should not appear on manuscripts; instead, a cover sheet, with the author's name and address and the title of the article, should accompany each manuscript.

**Permissions.** If the contribution includes any materials (e.g., quotations that exceed fair use, illustrations, charts, other graphics) that have been taken from another source, the author must obtain written permission to reproduce them in print and electronic formats.

Submissions should be sent electronically to [pmlasubmissions@mla.org](mailto:pmlasubmissions@mla.org).

### Review Process

Each article submitted and eligible for peer review is sent to at least two reviewers. Articles recommended by these readers are then sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet periodically with the editor to make final decisions. Until a final decision is reached, the author's name is not made known to readers, to members of the Editorial Board, or to the editor. For detailed information on the review process for submitted essays, please send an inquiry to [pmlasubmissions@mla.org](mailto:pmlasubmissions@mla.org).

### Features in PMLA

Manuscripts and correspondence related to the features described below should be sent to the Managing Editor, PMLA, Modern Language Association, 85 Broad Street, suite 500, New York, NY 10004-2434 ([pmlasubmissions@mla.org](mailto:pmlasubmissions@mla.org)).

### Special Topic

Articles on the general topic are invited; the subtopics listed are provided by way of example and suggestion only. Please see the editorial policy and eligibility requirements for material submitted to PMLA.

### Varieties of Digital Humanities

**Deadline for submissions: 12 March 2018**

Coordinators: Alison Booth (Univ. of Virginia) and Miriam Posner (Univ. of California, Los Angeles)

Digital humanities (DH) may not be a full-fledged discipline, but it has advanced beyond "the next big thing" to become a reality on many campuses.

Like many fields that have received a great deal of attention, DH derives energy from internal combustion and external friction—dissenters, supporters, and detractors see different sides of what may after all be too large a variety of practice to cohere as a field in the future. This moment, then, seems a good time to ask, What is next for DH? And what can we learn from what has come before?

*PMLA* invites essays that will help assess the past of DH, outline its current state, and point to its future directions among diverse participants, allies, and critics. The special issue welcomes well-informed critical essays that articulate varieties of digital experience with DH as it is commonly understood and as it is practiced in a more expansive, even contested, way, including but not limited to the following topics: game studies; digital narrative and poetry; social media and blogging; digital arts, including music and theater; digital pedagogy in languages, literatures, and writing (teaching with technology, e-portfolios, immersive technology, mapping assignments); textual editing; edited digital archives of manuscript or print materials; natural language processing and textual analysis of large corpora such as historical newspapers or a genre or a literary era; prosopographies, from ancient to modern; 3-D printing or modeling; virtual reality and photogrammetry documenting cultural heritage sites or artifacts; mapping and time lines to visualize trends in cultural or literary history; issues of copyright and commercial databases; theories and histories of digital technologies and their industrial and cultural impact; the growing field of criticism on digital scholarship and institutional change; advocacy or cultural criticism oriented toward new media and transformative practice.

The *PMLA* Editorial Board welcomes collaborative or single-author essays that take note of digital humanities of these or other varieties, whether centered on education or other spheres, whether ephemeral or long-standing. Submissions that consider a specific project should go beyond reporting on its methods and findings and emphasize its implications for digital literature and language scholarship. Of particular interest are reflections on DH as practiced beyond North America and Europe. Issues and themes might include accessibility, sustainability, standards of evidence, transforming the academic career, changing or pursuing further the abiding questions in the discipline. Histories, predictions, and manifestos may be welcome, but all essays should be accessible and of interest to the broad *PMLA* readership.

### Criticism in Translation

MLA members are invited to submit to the *PMLA* Editorial Board proposals for translations. Articles, as well as chapters or sections of books that can function as independent units, will be considered. The originals may be in any language. Two types of proposals are welcome: (1) significant scholarship from earlier periods that has not lost its forcefulness and whose retrieval in English in *PMLA* would be a noteworthy event for a broad body of readers

## Forthcoming in *PMLA*

### IN OTHER ISSUES (*continued*)

- PATRIZIA MCBRIDE. "Berlin Dada and the Time of Revolution"
- ANNA NELSON. "Unraveling the Mystery of *Behind the Seams*: The 'Colored Historian' of the White House and Her Pseudonymous Parodist"
- REBECCA OLSON. "The Continuing Adventures of *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*: Responsible Speculation"
- YI-PING ONG. "Anna Karenina Reads on the Train: Readerly Subjectivity and the Poetics of the Novel"
- ADAM REED. "Reading Minor Character: An English Literary Society and Its Culture of Investigation"
- MARGARET RUSSETT. "Language Strange: The Romantic Scene of Instruction in Twenty-First-Century Turkey"
- JONATHAN SACHS. "Slow Time"
- ANDREW STAUFFER. "An Image in Lava: Annotation, Sentiment, and the Traces of Nineteenth-Century Reading"
- TRISTRAM WOLFF. "That's Close Enough: The (Ongoing) History of Emotivism in Close Reading"
- CHRISTINE A. WOOLEY. "Held in Checks: Du Bois, Johnson, and the Figurative Work of Financial Forms"

### *Criticism in Translation*

- WOLFGANG EMMERICH. "What Is and to What End Does One Study GDR Literature?" Introduction and translation by Nicole Burgoyne and Andrew Hamilton
- CHARLES NODIER. "Du fantastique en littérature." Introduction and translation by Elizabeth Berkebile McManus and Daniela Ginsburg
- OTAKAR ZICH. "Theatrical Illusion," from *Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* (*Estetika dramatického umění*; 1931). Introduction and translation by Emil Volek and Andres Pérez-Simón

### *Little-Known Documents*

- E. M. FORSTER. "Pericles in Paradise." Introduction by Foteini Dimirouli
- LANGSTON HUGHES. "Four Poems from Langston Hughes's Spanish Civil War Verse." Evelyne Scaramella and Anne Donlon

and (2) contemporary work of sufficient weight and potential influence to merit the attention of the field as a whole.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should first ascertain that no previous English translation exists. The proposer should then provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the original essay, (2) an extended summary of the entire essay in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the essay if the essay is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the translation is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the proposer wishes to serve as translator of the essay or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), a 1,000-word sample of the translation should be submitted; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator.

The translated essays should normally not exceed *PMLA*'s 9,000-word limit. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals, evaluate the quality of the translations, and cooperate with the proposers and translators.

### Little-Known Documents

MLA members are invited to submit to the *PMLA* Editorial Board proposals regarding little-known documentary material that merits the attention of a broad range of readers. Consideration will be given to archival data from any period and in any language that do not exceed *PMLA*'s 9,000-word limit.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the document, (2) an extended summary of the document in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the document if it is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the document is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the document is not in English and if the proposer wishes to serve as translator or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), the proposal should include a 1,000-word sample of the translation; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator of accepted non-English material. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals.

### Solicited Contributions

The editor and the Editorial Board periodically invite studies and commentaries by specific authors on topics of wide interest. These contributions appear in the following series: Theories and Methodologies, The Changing Profession, The Book Market, The Journal World, Letters from Librarians, and Correspondents at Large. MLA members are welcome to suggest topics that might be addressed under these rubrics.

## Editor's Column

# Climate Humanists

**J**UST HOW IMPORTANT IS “BIG DATA” TO HUMANISTS? IS IT MOSTLY hype and hot air, as argued by Timothy Brennan in “The Digital Humanities Bust”? Or is it a genuine new beginning, as argued by Sarah E. Bond, Hoyt Long, and Ted Underwood in response? And what exactly does “big” mean?<sup>1</sup> Is the magnitude necessarily the result of algorithmic computation, a form of digital humanities based on data mining and yielding statistical observations about large corpora? Or could it be nonalgorithmic, coming from collaboration, say, rather than computation? Bond, Long, and Underwood point out that big data projects might look different in the future, transformed by new partnerships with libraries and museums. What might some of these projects be?

These questions were on my mind as I began a long and increasingly multiparty e-mail correspondence with the Data Refuge team at the University of Pennsylvania. Data Refuge is a collaboration between librarians, scientists, and humanists to save at-risk climate archives on federal Web sites. The fear is that, given the science-denying agenda of the Trump administration, any records documenting climate change will be erased. The first Data Refuge event, held the Saturday before the inauguration, featured 150 librarians, Web archivists, and humanists hunched over laptops on the sixth floor of the Van Pelt Library (Schlanger). Since then, more than fifty other similar events have been organized across North America. *PBS NewsHour* reported on this unprecedented collaboration (“How”), as did National Public Radio, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, Reuters, and *Wired*. Bethany Wiggin, a professor of German and director of the Penn Program in the Environmental Humanities, who spearheaded the

effort, was interviewed by Trevor Noah on *The Daily Show* ("Canada").

Wiggin had been my guide to other Penn projects, but one look at the operational logistics of Data Refuge—the networking needed to coordinate thousands of climate scientists and an equal number of volunteers with Web archiving skills—made it clear that a team rather than an individual ought to be my subject. Data here are about as big as they can get. Eventually four other people also joined the e-mail correspondence, reflecting the scope of the project and the supporting infrastructures needed: James English, faculty director of the Price Lab for Digital Humanities; Stewart Varner, managing director of the Price Lab; Paul Farber, managing director of the Penn Program in the Environmental Humanities; and Laurie Allen, director for digital scholarship in the Penn Libraries.

The institutional frame for digital work at the University of Pennsylvania was consolidated in 2015 by a two-million-dollar grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, given to the library, museum, and Price Lab as working partners. Henceforth, networking capabilities and technology personnel would be housed in the library and shared with individual research projects. Since one of the goals of the Penn Libraries is the "stewarding and preserving" of information, a climate-data project is squarely within its purview ("Mission"). Still, even for this well-funded entity, Data Refuge is too huge and too multifaceted to be undertaken alone.

The Penn researchers turned first to the Union of Concerned Scientists, an organization with over 125,000 members. With its help, they surveyed thousands of climate scientists, making a list of Web data considered the most important and most vulnerable, distributing this information to volunteer archivists across North America. Building on a Web-harvesting tool developed in Toronto by the newly formed Environmental Data and Governance Initiative, the Penn team then added preservation

protocols, expanded the scope of data gathering, and sponsored an array of science-literacy events. The library truism "lots of copies keep stuff safe," first coined at Stanford ([www.lockss.org](http://www.lockss.org)), served as the motto for this collaborative project, archiving information in multiple sites, in universities and private companies as well as in federal agencies. Since the archiving facilities at the University of Pennsylvania were not adequate to the amount of data saved and the demand for public access envisioned, Data Refuge eventually had to look for another home. Thanks to an anonymous donation of unlimited space on Amazon servers, this public-spirited project truly went public, configuring its storage space and archiving its material using open-source software, accessible to any user.

The data being protected are the result not of algorithmic aggregation but of crowdsourcing: a large number of volunteer archivists make this vast project possible. Magnitude, while necessary, is not the only consideration, however. Micronarrating is just as important. To anchor this big data project in lived experience, the Penn Program in the Environmental Humanities has also launched a human-scale companion project, called Data Refuge Stories. Working once again with the Union of Concerned Scientists, and supported now by the National Geographic Foundation, the team recorded face-to-face conversations with some two hundred earth scientists to be included in a digital "storybank" ("About"). The American Geophysical Union, the largest organization of space and planetary scientists, with over sixty thousand members from 137 countries ("Our History"), was impressed enough to host these storytellers at its December 2017 annual convention.

Could such a climate project, born of collaboration rather than computation, serve as a template for the humanities, including digital humanities?<sup>2</sup> Varner, speaking for the Price Lab, is emphatic in his reply. "For me, DH means humanists who are free to ask

questions, find answers, and tell stories using whatever tool or method is most appropriate," he writes, adding:

DH also means working closely with others despite collaboration being relatively rare (or even frowned on) in your field. DH also means being critical of technology; not from a Luddite's but from a hacker's perspective. Finally, DH means using a humanist's critical edge and concern for social justice to publicly engage with current concerns. From what I can see, Data Refuge enthusiastically checks each of those boxes.

Speaking for librarians, Allen adds that, in caring for its material the way it does, "Data Refuge is a project that shows us new kinds of work we want to be doing." The greatest achievement of this pioneering effort is in making a case for the efficacy of the humanities as collaborative partners. We tend "to see the problem of saving at-risk federal climate and environmental data as a primarily technical one, but it is, of course, bound together with deep civic and social problems," Allen writes. "Advocacy and storytelling remain at the heart of Data Refuge," since "a deeper public understanding of the relationship between federal environmental and climate data and people's lives is a necessary precondition for any long term solution to the problem of data vulnerability."

Data vulnerability is the new normal here, calling for a humanist scholarship likewise responsive and responsible. The ground-level work of identifying, gathering, and preserving at-risk material has become more urgent and more necessary than most of us would have imagined just a few years ago. An ethics of care is no longer a theory; it is above all a practice. And it might well be the most valuable thing humanists have to offer just now, a truly interdisciplinary platform, a kind of work meaningful to our colleagues in science, technology, engineering, and medicine, and necessary to our own field as we at-

tend to our precarity along with that of the planet. Data Refuge is, in this sense, a test case not only for climate activists but also for humanists of all stripes.

On 20 October 2017, *The New York Times* reported that all references to climate change had indeed been "scrubbed" from an Environmental Protection Agency Web site on energy and climate (Friedman). Talks by scientists on climate change were canceled, and e-mails by employees critical of the agency were investigated by a hired company (Lipton and Friedman). On 10 January 2018, *Scientific American* reported that thousands of climate Web pages had been erased from the Web sites of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, and the Department of the Interior, deleting information about renewable energies and climate-preparedness measures for cities and states (Waldman, "Climate Web Pages"). The timeliness and consequentialness of Data Refuge can no longer be in doubt. What's the implication of this project for the rest of us? Can we think of its combination of big data with micronarrating as a new direction for literary studies as a whole, tech-enabled but not tech-fetishizing, leading to scholarship that looks different from what we ordinarily do because prompted by circumstances also different?

The Theories and Methodologies contributors in this issue—faculty members, graduate students, and nonacademics—call attention to the no-longer-familiar forms writing can now take.<sup>3</sup> I'd like to make a case for macro-micro data projects in that context: as the no-longer-familiar work done by a new kind of humanism, "climate humanism," a twenty-first-century update on the humanism of the fifteenth century. Unlike Renaissance humanists, whose dedication to ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts blinded them to the emergence of print and the scientific revolution powered by that medium (Grafton), climate humanists are medium-conscious from the first, embracing the digital revolution

with open eyes, knowing that science-and-technology partnerships would be needed to get the job done. Climate humanism is born-digital and born-collaborative. Reaching back as well as staying current, it carries on the time-honored task of caring for archives but works with numbers as well as texts, doing so in a tech-based environment and using tools and platforms hitherto unknown.

Just how viable is climate humanism across scales? Is its macro-micro synthesis equally fruitful for the planet, the university, and the individual? What might it look like as a global initiative and as the work of a single pair of hands? In what follows, I explore some of these questions by looking at two projects, growing out of different contexts and working with different mediums and together giving a sense of the scalar variation in climate humanism: the nearly carbon-neutral conference pioneered by Ken Hiltner and the Kyoto-Protocol-inspired paintings of Peter Sacks.

Hiltner's conference was part of a larger Carbon Neutrality Initiative, announced in November 2013 by Janet Napolitano, president of the University of California. Noting that "global climate disruption is impacting the planet in ways never experienced in human history" and that such disruption is "driven by the release of carbon dioxide into the environment," the university's official statement "commits UC to emitting net zero greenhouse gases from its buildings and vehicle fleet by 2025, something no other major university system has done" ("Carbon Neutrality Initiative"). Enacted at all ten campuses of the University of California, the initiative is also meant to serve as a template for other educational institutions, nation-states, and supranational entities such as the Paris Agreement. "We are the University of California, and there is no reason that UC can't lead the world in this quest, as it has in so many others," Napolitano said (qtd. in Ramanathan et al.).

The Carbon Neutrality Initiative is climate humanism on a megascale. Recognizing

that the rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide is caused by human beings, it puts the burden of remedy squarely on human beings, taking under its care one particular bit of data: the current (and already dangerously elevated) carbon level of 405.1 parts per million (Waldman, "Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide"). Keeping that number from going any higher will be the collaborative work of everyone at the University of California, at all campuses and across all disciplines. How might humanists take an active part in this project that is so much theirs in spirit? In 2015, Hiltner—a Renaissance scholar at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of five books on ecocriticism—hit on the idea of the nearly carbon-neutral conference. He began a white paper with some eye-opening statistics: "30% of UCSB's total GHG [greenhouse-gas] emissions come from air travel to conferences, talks, and meetings. If we remove commuting from the equation, air travel jumps to 35%. This 30% (or 35%) figure for air travel represents approximately 55,000,000 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> or equivalent gasses." Globe-trotting humanists, even those giving papers on climate change, are making the problem worse. "Just 20 schools like UCSB would have combined GHG emissions for air travel of more than a billion pounds per year. As there are nearly 5,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. alone, the planet's institutions of higher learning are responsible for many, many billions of pounds of GHG emissions annually. All just from flying."

Hiltner had attended several high-tech virtual events in the past and found them disappointing. His conference requires a lower level of technology. Instead of presenting live video broadcasts, the conference features talks recorded in advance, using video cameras, computer cameras, even cell phones. When the conference begins, all the videos are posted simultaneously on *YouTube*, remaining open for several weeks. This lower level of technology allows for far greater dem-

ocratic representation and access. Attendees can watch the talks at all hours and any number of times. No one needs to miss talks from concurrent sessions. And, no longer hamstrung by the cost of air travel, conference organizers can invite speakers from any part of the world. Those from developing countries, frontline witnesses to the uneven pace of climate change, hitherto excluded from North American conferences, are now represented.

Teaming up with the sociologist John Foran, Hiltner set out to make the conference an experiment in “applied humanities,” a re-vamping of the “suite of practices that constitute the traditional academic conference.” What results is a climate-responsible alternative within reach of everyone. Making good use of carbon-emission data and in turn generating human data of its own, the conference makes one important contribution: quantitative evidence about the immediate social benefits of this climate initiative. For Foran, what began as a side effect—greater democratic representation—ended up being a key determinant. “Climate change,” he said, “is a massive social injustice” (qtd. in Murdock), repeating and exacerbating our current inequalities, putting the maximum burden on those least guilty of producing greenhouse gases. It is incumbent on us all to counter that injustice, and for humanists, undoing the structural inequalities of the academic conference might be the very place to begin.

As befits a macro-micro project, storytelling is crucial. Hiltner has written a practical guide, in which he discusses some previous findings and responds to frequently asked questions, making it clear that anyone familiar with *WordPress* can set up a nearly carbon-neutral conference in about a day. And the conference is a good story, with many surprises along the way. Among other things, the closed-captioning function of *YouTube* makes the talks accessible to the hearing-impaired, creating an unexpected partnership between climate humanists and the disability com-

munity. Meanwhile, the opening up of the conference as a continuous event lasting for several weeks gives people more time to think through the issues and ask informed questions. On average, the question-and-answer sessions of these conferences generated three times more discussion than would be the case at a traditional conference. Some sessions generated fifteen times the amount of discussion.

All of which is to say that a macro-micro project has many outcomes, producing data both big and small, significant to scientists and humanists alike. Hiltner is the first to admit that there is still room for improvement and complementary efforts. The conference is only nearly carbon-neutral, after all: watching online videos and powering the computers that host the event still leave a carbon footprint. By his analysis, the carbon footprint of an attendee is around one percent that of an attendee of a traditional conference. Any project operating online would have that footprint. Is zero emission ever possible, and just how necessary is digitization for climate humanists? Can the work of caring for data be done without making the digital medium a requisite every step of the way?

Peter Sacks's paintings come immediately to mind. A poet, scholar, and Harvard professor, Sacks has written five volumes of poetry and a study of the English elegy. Since 2002, however, he has made painting his medium, the form that his “writing” would henceforth take. He has long been drawn to writing understood in this primitive, elemental sense: as visual inscription of any sort, a record kept against all odds for otherwise unrecorded lives. Growing up in South Africa, he spent days and weeks wandering in the Drakensberg Mountains, looking at cave paintings made by the bushmen—human data that, according to him, “seemed to come out of the rock,” predating the print and digital revolutions, predating even cursive writing, yet persisting to this day, still-living testimonies to “people who had been forced out of the land”

(qtd. in Merkin). He began to take a notebook with him to jot down these data, a habit that he kept when he later traveled in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, always looking for human records hovering “between the spoken and the written, the seen and the sensed, the visible and the invisible” (Sacks, “Every Painting”). His poetry has been animated by such data; his handwrought, densely layered paintings now recall the same.<sup>4</sup>

Such paintings are about as nondigital as any twenty-first-century operating environment can be. “It matters to me,” Sacks says, “that the insistent materiality of my medium” counters the “otherwise dematerialized digital medium,” making viewers “physically as well as optically accountable for what is in front of them” (E-mail message [19 Dec. 2017]). That physical accountability is “never subject to abstract instrumentalizing or computation” (E-mail message [20 Nov. 2017]). Yet his data could not be bigger. Along with cave paintings, included here are archives gathered from across human history, some celebrated and some wrested from oblivion: the words on a burlap sack carrying sugar, the sales figures on a slave-ship logbook, the Geneva Conventions, the words of Primo Levi, lines from the Upanishads. These data are then painstakingly typed onto thin linen strips. The strips are in turn ripped, charred, or painted over. In some cases, they are buried under other kinds of material—shrouds,

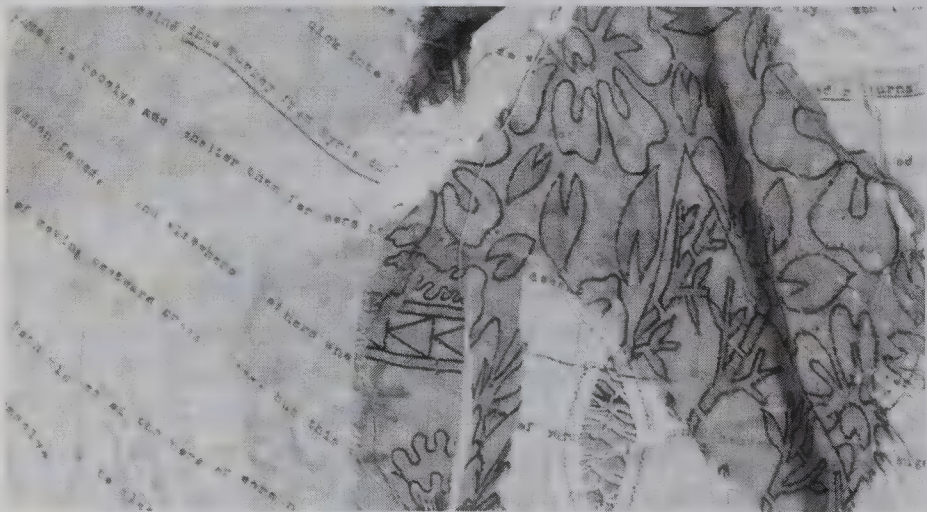
prison and work shirts, metal rings, threads, buttons, eyelets, ropes, fishing nets—creating ridged surfaces and partly exposed veins in layer after layer of perishable testimonies.

This is how Sacks “cares for” data: excavating them not to make them forever safe—an impossible task—but to highlight their vulnerability, their weak claim to existence. Sacks’s recent triptych *No Refuge* features, among other things, words taken from United Nations and newspaper reports about tens of thousands of Syrian refugees vainly seeking sanctuary on the Greek island of Lesbos (fig. 1). Following the movement of these refugees, strips of colored fabric undulate and pulsate across the three panels, but many come to a dead end, emblematic of the broken lives, lost belongings, and involuntary closures that ensue.

Working with his hands, and making his home among these charred and buried materials, Sacks is much less optimistic than digital natives, much less confident about the fate of human records. Data vulnerability, from his standpoint, has been a given since time immemorial: *refuge* can only be used in the negative. His series *Aftermath*, unrelenting in its reduction of the world to a debris field, is emphatic on this point. And yet, just as emphatically, the debris is not the end either, not an aftermath equated with a single terminal catastrophe. “Aftermath—many people think this word refers exclusively to the end point of something destructive, whereas the actual meaning of the word originally refers to the first regrowth of a field after it has been mowed,” Sacks says. He adds, “We have, by now, mowed down so much of ourselves and of the planet,” but something else always crops up afterward, for the physicality of visual inscription—its existence as material “traction” as well as signifying “abstraction”—allows it to have a life and a trajectory different from

FIG. 1

Peter Sacks, *No Refuge*, detail. Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, New York.



the destructive forces visited on it. For Sacks, “[t]he show is about survival. It is about what endures” (E-mail message [20 Nov. 2017]).

Sacks’s *Kyoto Protocol* proceeds with just that understanding. Painted between 2014 and 2016, almost twenty years after the 1997 climate agreement setting specific carbon reduction targets for industrialized nations, the triptych could be said to be about a glaring failure, a debris field of its own. After all, while most nations ratified the Kyoto Protocol and while the European Union was on track to reach or even exceed its carbon-reduction targets, there was one conspicuous nonsignatory: the United States. This outlier, along with China and India (exempt from specific targets because of their historically low emissions), now churns out enough extra carbon dioxide to wipe out all the combined reductions made by other countries. Worldwide, carbon emissions soared by nearly forty percent between 1990 and 2009, the period covered by the Kyoto Protocol (Clark), “reaching an all-time high of 34 billion tonnes in 2011” (Olivier et al.).

These are dismal statistics. And yet Sacks’s *Kyoto Protocol* seems oddly undiscouraged. Like *No Refuge*, its companion in adversity, this triptych tells a story of thwarted efforts, dashed hopes, and wasted labor—but

does so through a micronarrative that, while documenting a disappointing outcome, is clearly not coterminous with that outcome. The choice of the triptych is key here. The story of the Kyoto Protocol has to be told in three panels (fig. 2), with record keeping starting at a much earlier point and, thanks to that long backward arc, not quite ceasing with the supposed end. In this tripartite composition, two-thirds of the canvas is given over to the aspirations leading up to the signing of the protocol, aspirations so deep and abiding that they persist even when judged to be futile.

The first panel, a groundswell of possibilities, features many strips of brightly colored fabric, some with flowers on them, crisscrossing and going energetically onward. In the second panel, these strips seem to burst forth in a concerted flowering, almost completely covering the canvas, filling the background void with vibrant colors and motions. In the third panel, most of these strips are gone, swept away by an obliterating hand, leaving us with the background void, now dominant. What makes this void not conclusive, not quite the last word, is that instead of being the ground of reality, it turns out to be visibly imposed from above, a flimsy white fabric pasted on, and already torn in a couple of places, showing the brightly colored fabric still alive



FIG. 2

Peter Sacks, *Kyoto Protocol*. Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery, New York.

underneath (fig. 3). The groundswell of aspirations in the first panel, seemingly epiphenomenal, is in fact deep-rooted. It has gone under for the moment, biding its time. But already, in the resurfacing of those vibrant colors and motions, another forward arc is in the offing.

The Kyoto Protocol is kept going by just such an arc. Though some have consigned it to the “ash heap of history” (Brandon), that ash heap has proved fertile ground, an incubator for what would come next. The Paris Agreement, adopted on 12 December 2015, with 195 signatories, picked up just where the Kyoto Protocol left off. The action of the United States, in this case, has not undermined the resolve of the other treaty members but strengthened it. On 6 July 2017, one month after Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement, France pledged to ban all new gas and diesel cars by 2040 as part of its compli-

ance (“France”). On 12 December 2017, the second anniversary of the agreement, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, teamed up with the United Nations and the World Bank to host One Planet Summit. Fifty world leaders attended. The rallying cry was “Make Our Planet Great Again” (Gleiser).

None of these events could have been foreseen by Sacks when he began creating *Kyoto Protocol* in 2014. Yet his tripartite composition, telling a story at once granular and elongated, and tracing its trajectory backward and forward, already intuitively, through the very form of narrative, that this apparently failed treaty is far from doomed. This too is how he “cares for” data—caring for it by highlighting just how big it is, how far-reaching and densely layered, a much larger archive than the finite one at any cutoff point. This large archive tells us that any depopulated field is only momentary, unlikely to be the sum total.

The Kyoto Protocol, carried forward in the Paris Agreement and in Sacks’s triptych, now digitized and viewable online, shows us just what big data climate humanists can do with micronarrating.

Wai Chee Dimock

FIG. 3  
Peter Sacks, *Kyoto Protocol*, detail.  
Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery,  
New York.



## NOTES

1. For meditations on scale and size, see especially Booth; Drucker; Piper.

2. For more on the relation between environmental humanities and digital humanities, see the Changing Profession section on ecological digital humanities in the March 2016 issue of *PMLA* (vol. 131, no. 2).

3. Kittler is the first to call attention to the transformation of writing in a digital age.

4. In an e-mail correspondence on 18 November 2017, Sacks wrote, “I am actually excited by the term ‘data’ especially when plus ‘refuge’ and also when thought upon as threshold of given and found.”

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# Spenser at Play

JOE MOSHENSKA

## Playful Moments

READING *THE FAERIE QUEENE* IS LIKE PLAYING. THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY pleasurably entangled in the coils of Edmund Spenser's poem will approve of this claim, which will likely be met with incredulity by those who find Spenser tedious, arcane, or hectoring, or a vile apologist for imperialist atrocities, and who read him reluctantly or not at all. In claiming that reading one's way through Faerieland is a playful experience, I am not simply throwing my lot in with the former group. I happen to find reading Spenser's poem, and thinking and talking about it, to be a delight, but my pleasure is informed, even heightened, by the awareness that trying to read or know *The Faerie Queene* can also be an exhausting struggle, a recurring encounter with the poem's own violence and limitations. In presenting play—and especially the play of children—as an indispensable horizon within which to experience and interpret Spenser's work, I aim not to simplify or idealize the relationships that readers (myself included) might have with it but to explore the unfolding complexity of these relationships.

There have been many attempts to align the reading of poetry with the experience of play, both during and long before Spenser's lifetime, as well as in modern aesthetics.<sup>1</sup> Rather than venture a general definition of *play*, which Maurizio Bettini justly calls "that impossibly difficult word" (216),<sup>2</sup> I will focus on three of its salient characteristics and look at the way they relate to the experience of reading *The Faerie Queene*. First, play does not establish a stable relation with its object; instead, the relation between player and plaything changes, unpredictably, through time. Second, this affective, temporally uneven mode of interaction leads the plaything not only

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to gain significance but also to verge on animation and agency. Third—in part because it combines animating intensity and unpredictability—play tends to be opaque, its precise meaning ungraspable by those who are not involved in it (and perhaps by those who are).

Where should we begin looking for these characteristics in Spenser's poem, in order to understand the playful experience of reading *The Faerie Queene*? Most readers would think instinctively of the moments in the middle books in which Spenser's imagination seems to relax and expand, set pieces like the Garden of Adonis where a metaphysics of playful flux is developed (3.6.46–49).<sup>3</sup> Or one might look to the innocent pastoral stretches of the sixth book, in which the courteous Calidore has time "[t]o practise games, and maisteries to try" (6.9.43.2). Alternatively, book 2 might be read as framed by forms of playfulness: from the "louely babe" Ruddymane, who inadvertently "did play / His cruell sport" in the blood of his dying mother (2.1.40.5–6), to the alluringly playful creatures, wittily dubbed "boy toys" by Joseph Campana (134–37), who populate the Bower of Bliss (2.12.42–87).

To focus solely on these moments, however, would reinforce accounts of *The Faerie Queene* that, when they acknowledge Spenser's playfulness, explain it away as Ovidian, Ariostan, or Theocritan. Thus, James Nohrberg writes, "An element of play in Spenser's poem is hardly to be missed; like Ariosto, Spenser shows an appreciation for romance as an enlightening form of recreation, or imaginative exercise" (286), while Harry Berger, Jr., argues that "[i]n Spenser's mixed mode of Romance, with its serious play, Theology provides the high seriousness and Faerie the pure play" (88). Berger's phrase "serious play" knowingly deploys the adjective that has adhered to the author of *The Faerie Queene* ever since John Milton described him as "[o]ur sage and serious poet Spenser" (2: 516).<sup>4</sup> Berger is willing to acknowledge that this seriousness is leavened by play, but we can, he maintains,

distinguish between the two, and seriousness weighs down play and keeps it in check.<sup>5</sup>

This clear division between the playful and the serious can help to explain the uniquely mixed history of Spenser's reception: he has been attacked both for being too inane, trivial, and childish and for being excessively dour and moralizing.<sup>6</sup> To claim that Spenser's play is serious is to align him with dominant early modern accounts of child's play, which was permissible as long as it was regulated and teleologically directed, "in an attempt to prepare [children] early for the world they would enter as adolescents and adults" (Ozment 70). If this does indeed account for Spenser's blend of childish triviality and telic normativity, it would seem easy to fold the playfulness present in *The Faerie Queene* into his famously stated aim "to fashion a gentleman or noble person" ("Letter" 714). Stephen Greenblatt, who inspired much focus on this phrase, does not explicitly discuss play in Spenser, but his work usefully illuminates the boundaries within which the relatively scarce discussions of play in the early modern period have tended to function. On the one hand, play is viewed as a way of subverting but ultimately reasserting cultural norms, in a manner congruent with play as the child's teleological development; this fits Greenblatt's account of self-fashioning as a normative process and resonates with the various readings of carnivalesque play informed by Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, in his readings of Christopher Marlowe, Greenblatt develops a very different account of a "will to play," which "flaunts society's cherished orthodoxies" and "courts self-destruction in the interest of the anarchic discharge of its energy. This is play on the brink of an abyss, *absolute* play" (220).<sup>8</sup> Marlovian play is not self-fashioning but self-consuming, somewhere between a howl of despair and a gleeful cackle, and it is finally impotent: "the attempts to challenge this system" are "exposed as unwitting tributes to

that social construction of identity against which they struggle” (209).

While new historicism valuably complicated the question of what might count as work or play in a given cultural moment,<sup>9</sup> the forms of playfulness in Spenser cannot be folded into a narrative of teleological self-fashioning; nor are they a desperate Marlovian playing on the brink of the abyss, a playing that tries and fails to destabilize everything. I want instead to approach *The Faerie Queene* with a ludic hermeneutic that arises from the rhythmic experience of reading it, a means of understanding the poem in terms of the three characteristics of play that I outlined above: unpredictability, affective investment, and opacity. The way the poem both plays with and becomes a plaything for its reader arises in part from the difficulty of knowing how adequately to assail its vast and unfinished bulk. What exactly is this huge thing? What am I supposed to do with it? Its enormous length seems to demand that I plow speedily onward if I am ever to reach the end; but as soon as I notice a telling detail that slows me down, leads me to stop and ponder, to tease out alternative possibilities, I encounter moments of inextricable delight and panic. I delight not only at a particular moment but at the possibility that any moment, if I choose to slow down and give it sufficient time, might reveal startling depths; my delight is shadowed by the anxious realization that I could never read the poem in this way, that to treat each of its moments with the care they seem to demand would take more than a lifetime’s reading. I would only ever read this book and never finally have read it: so Jonathan Goldberg suggests when he writes that *The Faerie Queene* “demands the ‘endlesse worke’ of play” (*Endlesse Worke* 11).

To explain why these fundamental aspects of the poem lead the reader toward a playful hermeneutic, it is useful to identify and contest the role fleetingly played by Spenser in Stanley Fish’s influential account of *Paradise Lost*, in which Fish argues that read-

ers of Milton’s poem are chastened by the narrator and brought up against the fact of their own recurrent sinfulness, in a cumulatively educative process. Near the outset, describing the account of Despaire in *The Faerie Queene*, Fish claims that “Spenser’s test of his reader is less stringent than Milton’s; he makes his warning the experience of this description rather than an abstract statement of disapproval” (20). I would argue, contra Fish, that readers of *The Faerie Queene* are no less compelled than readers of *Paradise Lost* to wonder about and at the experience of their own reading but that the absence of “an abstract statement of disapproval” makes this experience potentially playful rather than consistently chastening. This is particularly the case when figures in the poem whom we might be inclined to interpret in clear moral and allegorical terms—figures about whom we apparently know how we are supposed to think—behave in ways that tempt us to accord them a depth, a complexity, an attitude toward their own place in the poem: something approaching a character’s internal life. What makes these moments particularly playful for the reader is the sequence of questions that they provoke: First, could this figure, this agglomeration of conventions, really have something akin to thoughts and feelings, a personalized past and future? Second, how can it be that I have found myself in a position where I am tempted to read in this way? What does this say about the poem and about me as a reader? And then follows a cascade of subsidiary questions: Am I overreading, perhaps just wildly speculating? Or could it truly be that *The Faerie Queene* asks us to consider each of its myriad figures in this way, to wonder about their stories and their selves? The experience of reading the poem consists in part of bouncing pleurably between questions of this kind—a rhythm of investment in the poem and of stepping back to consider, probe, and enjoy the unexpected nature of our investment. This is the rhythm of Spenserian play itself, neither sleekly linear

and comfortably normative nor of the absolute and self-defeating Marlovian sort. Readers take pleasure in startlingly expanded possibilities of thought and imagination for which they have no preexisting category; they are led to think not just new thoughts but new kinds of thought about these fictional creatures.<sup>10</sup> Spenser's play intimates the possibility that genuinely novel and unanticipated possibilities erupt where his poem seems the most poetically or ideologically determined: for him, as for Theodor W. Adorno, "[t]he unreality of games gives notice that reality is not yet real," not yet fixed and final (228).

While I have focused on the reader's unfolding response, however, mine is not simply an unhistorical or presentist account. If we want to understand the playfulness of *The Faerie Queene*, and perhaps of early modern literature more broadly, we need to develop a finer appreciation of the complex ludic forms that emerged in England during this period and that illuminate Spenser's peculiar playfulness.<sup>11</sup> In the first section of this essay, I explore a striking and overlooked activity that exemplifies the way a plaything can, like Spenser's figures, be suspended between meaningfulness and inertia and remain open to a rhythm of alternating responses. I then hold this example up as a lens through which to view one of the apparently less playful passages of *The Faerie Queene*, the defeat of the dragon at the end of book 1, whose title is the "Legend of Holiness." My reading will focus on this small section of the poem because, as I have suggested, it is in the flickers of possibility that emerge in such fleeting moments that *The Faerie Queene* engages its readers most playfully, but I also indicate a wider range of ways in which the poem plays with us and we with it.

### "I Haue Here Myne Ydoll": Iconoclasm and Child's Play

"In the 'Legend of Holiness,'" writes James Kearney, "Spenser not only depicts a range

of idolatrous texts and books but also elaborates an iconoclastic hermeneutics that distinguishes between a properly transcendent reading and an idolatrous tarrying with letters and things" (113). Kearney's claim joins a series of readings that have recognized the centrality of iconoclasm—the breaking of images and holy things—to *The Faerie Queene*, especially to its first book (Gilman; Gross, *Spenserian Poetics*; Gregerson). As these accounts acknowledge, however, Spenser's attitude toward iconoclasm is notably ambivalent: the satyrs who worship Una are the most obviously idolatrous figures in the "Legend," yet they are not monstrous or depraved but, as William A. Oram has recently noted, "a cheerful tribe of fauns . . . sweet, charming, and a bit dim," described by Spenser in a tone that is "obviously comic and friendly" (41, 54n16). The only literal iconoclast to appear in book 1, Kirkrapine, clearly numbers among the poem's villains and is "quite dismembered" by the "cruell clawes" of Una's lion (1.3.20.4, 19.8). If Kearney can nonetheless describe Spenser's advancing of an "iconoclastic hermeneutics," this is in part because iconoclasm itself has increasingly been interpreted as an activity fraught with ambivalence, riven with internal tensions and contradictions.<sup>12</sup> Among these, two stand out: first, iconoclasts, through the fury with which they take aim at their loathed object, risk conferring on it a version of the power and significance that they angrily claim to deny—an object that is so dangerous, so in need of destruction, palpably *matters*; second, iconoclasts are torn between the total obliteration of the object, which risks creating a void into which new errors can flood, and its partial retention—theoretically as a reminder of error overcome but actually carrying the risk that it might become an object of new, covert devotions. In this way iconoclasm often seems to oscillate between overt skepticism and a strange kind of negative faith, and between the imperatives to remember and to forget.<sup>13</sup>

While these accounts have enriched our understanding of iconoclasm, they largely agree on what iconoclasm involved and what iconoclasts typically did: burn and break objects, humiliate them, or adapt them for ostentatiously humdrum use. Such actions were not, however, the iconoclasts' entire repertoire. This becomes clear from a sermon delivered near Bristol in the 1530s, at the height of the first cycle of English reformed iconoclasm, by the theologically conservative preacher Roger Edgeworth, who insisted that emerging forms of reformed religion had produced not heightened piety but a widespread irreverence and ribaldry among ordinary Christians.<sup>14</sup> In his sermon "treatying of the fift gift of the holy gost, called the spirite of Science," Edgeworth claimed that

at the dissolution of Monasteries and of Freers houses many Images haue bene caryed abrod, and gyuen to children to playe wyth all. And when the children haue theym in theyr handes, dauncynge them after their childyshe maner, commeth the father or the mother and saythe: What nasse, what haste thou there? the childe aunsweareth (as she is taught) I haue here myne ydoll, the father laugheth and maketh a gaye game at it. So saithe the mother to an other, Iugge, or Thommye, where haddest thou that pretye Idoll? Iohn our parishe clarke gaue it me, saythe the childe, and for that the clarke muste haue thankes, and you shall lacke no good chere. (143)

The practice that Edgeworth describes was apparently common enough that he expected his audience to be familiar with it and—he hoped—to be appalled by its irreverence. In this time and place, it seems, iconoclasm and child's play could be one and the same. Instead of being burned, broken, or debased, some formerly holy objects were placed in the hands of children, who were not only expected but practically compelled to play with them: to treat them as toys.<sup>15</sup> There is scattered but definitive evidence that iconoclasm

took the form of child's play with some frequency in the sixteenth century, in locations as varied as Lincolnshire, where liturgical items such as pyxes became playthings (Peacock 55, 108); Cologne, where in 1536 a man was reported to have pulled the arms from a crucifix and given it to his children as a toy (Scribner 114); and Southeast Asia, where, as Tara Alberts observes, "the Dutch would demonstrate their disdain for popish images by confiscating pictures and ornaments . . . with those of less value given to children, 'to play with them like Dolls'" (148).

Historians have taken note of Edgeworth's description, but they have interpreted it as the actualization of a pervasive strand in reformed polemic that dismissed traditional religion as the inane playing of children.<sup>16</sup> Spenser was well aware of this strategy: in the "Maye" eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), the "false Foxe" disguises himself "as a poore peddler . . . / Bearing a trusse of tryfles at hys backe, / As bells, and babes, and glasses in hys packe" (lines 236, 238–40), and E. K.'s gloss explains that "by such trifles are noted, the reliques and ragges of popish superstition, which put no smal religion in Belles: and Babies & Idoles: and glasses & Paxes, and such lyke trumperies" (*Shorter Poems* 85).<sup>17</sup> The broad currency of this polemic doubtless helped make iconoclastic child's play comprehensible: nonetheless, there is an enormous difference between merely dismissing a traditional religious object as a trifling plaything and actually converting it into an object for child's play.

Even in Edgeworth's brief and critical sketch, we glimpse something of the mixture of thrilling, daring delight and vexed uncertainty that iconoclastic child's play prompted. To interpret the scene, I propose a return to the three characteristics of play outlined above. The first, temporal flux and instability, has been recognized and misrecognized by influential modern theories of play. Bruno Bettelheim recognizes its value for the child

as a way of navigating temporal change: "Play is anchored in the present, but it also takes up and tries to solve problems of the past, and is often future directed, as well" (40). This temporal dimension is exemplified in the most theorized of all childish play scenes, the "Fort-Da" game played by "Little Ernst" and described by Sigmund Freud, in which the unfolding rhythm of a disappearing and reappearing wooden reel allows the child to cope with the similarly fluctuating presence of his mother ("Pleasure Principle" 140–43).<sup>18</sup> Yet Freud's account also reveals the temptation for the watching adult to reduce the child's playing to a single and self-contained function even as it occurs—Little Hans is "pressured into creating meaning," as Jonathan Lear puts it (96). What we need to resist is not the claim that such play has meaning but the assumption that it is stable and continuous: Kenneth Gross is more perceptive in this regard when he asks, of toys, "what it means for the child to enter into always changing relation to such objects (things often made and given to children by adults)" (Introduction xi–xii).<sup>19</sup>

The possibility of play as an "always changing relation" to an object both animates and unsettles Edgeworth's scene. The polemical charge of putting a formerly holy thing into a playing child's hand relies on the capacity for change—from the loftiest to the lowest, the most elevated to the most trivial. Yet, theoretically at least, this iconoclastic transformation is supposed to be decisive: the object has been demeaned once and for all, unmasked as the trifling bauble that it always was. If play constantly shifts in relation to its object, it is harder to be certain that such irreversible disenchantment has taken place. This helps explain the ambivalent behavior of the parents whom Edgeworth describes. The children who have been given the images cannot simply be left to their own devices, presumably unaware of the symbolic and deflationary significance of their recreation. The children are already "dauncynge" the images

"after their childyshe maner" when their parents arrive, but the play that has begun unprompted cannot be allowed to run its own course; it must be supervised and carefully shaped. The parents' entry into the scene of play appears to express two intertwined but incompatible motives: they seem drawn there by the thrill of transgression, delighted to see the objects that they have removed from "Monasteries and . . . Freers houses" scandalously mishandled, and in this sense they seek a pleasure in play that parallels the children's own. At the same time, however, they cannot resist intervening, thereby tacitly acknowledging that the children's play does not possess a single, stable meaning. The adult interposes a question, but the question has a single correct answer, which the child knows to recite: "I haue here myne ydoll." The approving mirth of the adult who hears this anticipated answer and "laugheth and maketh a gaye game at it" confirms that the children are successfully following the catechistic script that they have carefully been taught.<sup>20</sup> The adults seem both to desire the wild, transformative unpredictability of play that makes the children's actions iconoclastic and to need reassurance that the play possesses a single, approved meaning. They are torn, like play itself, between disorder and order.

The interplay of delight and nervousness on the part of the watching adults can be understood in relation to the second feature of play, its tendency to animate its object—or, we might rather say, in the light of its unpredictable rhythms, to oscillate between moments of animation and moments of inertia.<sup>21</sup> The unfolding rhythm of play constantly traverses such divides, leading the plaything, as Bettini aptly writes, to exist "on the margins of a world of movement" (219). The unfolding rhythm of play must not, however, be sentimentalized as a pattern of love and affection lavished on its object. Just as the plaything's degree of animation and significance shifts for the child, play itself alternates between

moments of care and moments of violence. The child's plaything can be dead and broken at one moment but startlingly reanimated the next. This creates an obvious tension for the notion of iconoclastic child's play: if a child breaks or rends a toy, this can signal not its intrinsic triviality but its deep and enduring significance to the child. This is well understood by the most resonant modern accounts of the child-toy relation: Charles Baudelaire claims, "The overriding desire of most little brats . . . is to get at and *see the soul* of their toys" by ripping them open (20). Here the toy is broken not because it no longer matters but because it matters deeply; not because it is inert but because it seems troublingly animate. Similarly, for Rainer Maria Rilke it was the "terrible, thick forgetfulness" of the doll that provoked his "hatred," aimed at "that gruesome alien body for which we have wasted our purest warmth" (qtd. in Simms 670). Thrilling, unsettling life and horrifying deadness seem to alternate in the child's encounter with the toy. The iconoclastic parents want their children to establish an unchanging relation with the formerly holy objects, one that decisively de-means those objects: but play, as Christopher Bollas puts it, involves "an emerging rhythm of mindfulness, mindlessness, and mind objectified as an object of thought" (69).

Yet even these descriptions may be too definitive, as we are reminded by the third characteristic of play, its opacity, or what Gross helpfully calls "the *mysterious* roots of the child's relation to its toys" (Introduction xi; my emphasis). Psychoanalysts including Donald Winnicott and Bettelheim have stressed the overwhelming temptation for adults to intervene and shape the meaning of play for the child engaged in it, as well as the importance of abstaining from impositions of this sort. The history of childhood, especially of child's play, cannot avoid becoming a version of this intrusive attempt to understand: "the adult's imagination of the child's imagination," as Michael Taussig calls it (136, 204, 259). Chil-

dren at play in the past left no record of their beliefs and intentions; the history of child's play is inescapably the history of adults' attitudes toward such play—their attempts, whether delighted or desperate, to shape it and reassure themselves of its propriety.<sup>22</sup>

Medieval and Renaissance accounts of child's play also hint at its unpredictable, inconstant, ambiguously animating potential. The received wisdom contained in the encyclopedic *De proprietatibus rerum* (c.1240), by Bartholomaeus Anglicus (c.1203–72), newly translated into English in 1578, noted that children

desire things that be to them contrary and grievous, and set more of the image of a child, than the image of a man, and make more sorrow and woe, and weepe more for the losse of an apple, than for the losse of their heritage, and the goodnesse that is done for them, they let it passe out of minde. They desire all thinges that they see, and praye and aske with voyce and with hande. . . . Sodainly they laugh, and sodainly they weepe. Alway they crye, iangle, scorne, & disdaine, that unneth [unless] they be still while they sleep. (folio 73r)<sup>23</sup>

This is, I would argue, not the disdainful account that it seems but a defensive and anxious attempt to make sense of the changeability and opacity of children's behavior and their playing, the sudden lurches in significance of their actions and of the objects to which they are attached. This sense of the child's desires and emotions as both rampant and shifting underpins the idea of iconoclastic child's play and ensures that it cannot once and for all fulfill the iconoclasts' desire to diminish the status of the object.

Sadly, Edgeworth does not specify the objects with which the children are led to play, but, unlike the large-scale and grandly visible paraphernalia destroyed in churches and town squares, they must have comfortably fit a child's hand.<sup>24</sup> The dense and conflicting

forms of significance encapsulated in these diminutive objects are captured in the word the children know to use for their playthings: “ydoll” or “Idoll.” Reformers, Spenser included, endlessly delighted in puns on “idol” and “idle,” part of the larger polemical alignment of popery and childish indolence.<sup>25</sup> Its use by Edgeworth, however, suggests the volatility of this punning alignment when it is put into practice, as holy things actually became playthings: modern eyes cannot help but see the word *doll* lodged in the sixteenth-century orthography. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains this term as a contraction of the name “Dorothy” and cites no example that clearly means “an image of a human being . . . used as a plaything” before the end of the seventeenth century (“Doll,” defs. 1, 2.a). Yet I am drawn to this anachronistic, speculative etymology, as emblematic of the temporal and imaginative disjunctions to which this “Idoll,” this unholy toy, could give rise. “Idoll” is an apt name for this composite, ambiguous figure, which could alternately be loved and hated, revered and tormented. It lives a strange afterlife in its new domestic setting, a troubling reminder to the would-be iconoclast that, if one wants to rid an object of all meaning and power, the last place to put it is in the hand of a playing child.

### “The Fry of Children Yong”: Spenser’s Toy Dragon

The eruption of iconoclastic child’s play in the midst of Edgeworth’s sermon both demands and thwarts interpretation. As Gordon Teskey has argued, Spenser routinely thinks in terms of such charged flashes, which are simultaneously “a *moment* of arrest, an instant within which, so long as it lasts, nothing seems to move or change,” and “a destabilizing element in a totality . . . effecting some change in that whole.” Instances of play in *The Faerie Queene* exemplify this heady, tense combination of “instability and

stasis, movement and arrest” (“Thinking Moments” 114).<sup>26</sup> The fleeting moment on which I will focus occurs at the end of book 1, the titanic battle between the book’s hero, the Red Crosse Knight, and the malevolent dragon whose defeat has been the aim of his quest. The dragon seems to be crammed almost with more significance than it can bear: religious and historical allegory sit conspicuously alongside fairytale and myth.<sup>27</sup> Once the dragon is defeated, though, the proliferation of potential meanings with which it seems to quiver fall suddenly away. It is reduced to a hulking carcass, a “huge and horrible . . . masse” of flesh (1.11.55.2). Shorn of its allegorical significance, this creature becomes a mere slab of meat.

In reducing this lively figure of satanic malevolence to lifeless inertia, the Red Crosse Knight behaves like a good iconoclast.<sup>28</sup> Spenser’s dragon, though, is not reduced to ashes and powder: like the holy thing allowed to remain in situ in broken form, it lingers on as a material mass subjected to new practices and interpretations. When the “raskall many . . . / Heaped together in rude rabblement” pour from the city to behold the fallen beast, “The sight with ydle feare did them dismay, / Ne durst approach him nigh, to touch, or once assay” (1.12.9.1–2, 8–9). It is not the anxieties of the adult townspeople, however, that most richly embody the propensity of Spenser’s allegorical villains to continue accruing meanings even after they have been broken and laid low. The “rude rabblement” (1.12.9.2) who approach the giant carcass are accompanied by “the fry of children yong,” who “[t]heir wanton sports and childish mirth [do] play” (7.1–2). If the adults approach the dragon with trepidation, theirs is an anxiety from which these children are blithely liberated, though the adults remain anxious on the children’s behalf, alarmed at their gaming:

One mother, whenas her foolehardy chyld  
Did come too neare, and with his talants play

Halfe dead through feare, her litle babe reuyld  
 [scolded],  
 And to her gossibs gan in counsel say;  
 How can I tell, but that his talants may  
 Yet scratch my sonne, or rend his tender hand.  
 (1.12.11.1–6)

The horrifying dragon is reduced, not only to a lifeless carcass, but to a child's plaything. On one level the emergence of the children makes sense: the titanic clash has had the feel of a fairytale, a rattling yarn emerging from popular culture, and indeed both Saint George and the dragon lived on in sixteenth-century England well after they were proscribed as popish idols.<sup>29</sup> Even this context, however, cannot account for the delicate modulations of Spenser's poem. The children who surround and play with the dragon mark a startling tonal shift from the battle scene's grand spectacle. Despite the dragon's vast size, the newly humdrum nature of its threat draws it into the realm of the domestic and the ordinary. The mother is not afraid because her son is toying with an allegory of satanic malevolence; the dragon's claws are just another sharp surface that endangers the boy's "tender hand," no different from a pair of mishandled scissors. The children are happy to play with the fearsome talons of the fallen monster, cheerfully unaware of the hermeneutic problems posed by its continued presence in the poem, and indeed in Reformation culture, after it has outworn its allegorical usefulness.

Like Edgeworth's scene, this moment can fruitfully be considered in terms of the three characteristics of play, and the playfully self-reflexive hermeneutic adopted by the reader of the poem, outlined above. The narrator's adjectives—"wanton" and "childish"—seem to protest too much, and the force of this narrative dismissal and the mothers' anxiety heighten the focus on this fleetingly mentioned play. A radical change has occurred, a profound shift in our assumptions about the kinds of beings who populate this poem and our potential ways of relating to them, which

we only now realize we had been adopting: we would never have thought that an apocalyptic, heavily allegorical dragon might serve as a plaything, and now we cannot help but wonder what it might look and feel like to the children, what sorts of games might be spun around its vast, ungainly bulk. The sense that the status of the fallen dragon changes at this moment, and will continue to shift through the rhythms of the play converging on it (the children's and the reader's), is heightened by the brevity and opacity of the description, the powerful sense that these games—the motives of the children and the changed nature of the dragon as it becomes a plaything—remain opaque to the reader as well as to the narrator and the parents. Finally, the townspeople's terror that the dragon might not be truly dead—"for yet perhaps remaynd / Some lingering life within his hollow brest" (1.12.10.3–4)—is both nullified and realized by the playing children: they calm such anxiety in their blithe inadvertence, even as they confirm its basis by showing that the dragon will continue to verge on the animate, stubbornly refusing to vanish or to die precisely by becoming a plaything.

Its lingering as a giant toy ensures that this creature will not vanish entirely from the landscape of the poem.<sup>30</sup> The playing children embody Spenser's compulsive interrogation of the cognitive and representational commitments of his poem and his equally compulsive need to acknowledge forms of action and life that stand outside the totalized meaningfulness of his allegory.<sup>31</sup> Spenser's dragon, like the images played with by the children whom Edgeworth describes, is not reduced to mere triviality when it becomes a toy. Instead, it becomes a new sort of being. It is impossible to specify just what it becomes, because to do so, to assign it a new determinate meaning, would be to fold it back into the logic of the allegory. The dragon here becomes an "Idoll": not an object definitively shorn of meaning but one for which play opens up the possibility of newly emerging

and oscillating attitudes, potentially both caring and violent, that cannot be delimited or anticipated. The reader must ask at this point what it means for the techniques and commitments of Spenser's poem if even the most threatening allegorical being can become a toy—and if this change can occasion an opaque delight, for the children and for the reader of the poem, that seems entirely separate from the violently iconoclastic energies responsible for the dragon's destruction.

If the dragon's transformation into an everyday plaything gives a thrill of playful pleasure through the unanticipated possibility that an allegorical hulk might become a toy, it is also, in Teskey's terms, "a destabilizing element in a totality," prompting readers both to respond to the poem and to respond wonderingly to their own response, in the manner discussed above: this shifting rhythm of response is, I have suggested, a form of play, radically discontinuous, its terms and logic shifting as we progress, like the unfolding rhythms of a child with a toy. Prominent among the thrilling and terrifying challenges with which Spenser's poem confronts its readers is the challenge of retrospection created by such moments. To interpret the poem, it is not enough to forge onward with the single-mindedness of a questing knight: rather, it can sometimes feel, impossibly, as if the reader needs constantly to start again, to reread the entire poem up to that point in the light of a new revelation about the ways in which it proves able to operate.

Although it arrives in the poem crammed with symbolic malevolence, a terrifying panoply of fangs, fire, and flaggy wings, once reread through the lens of its eventual transformation into a child's plaything the dragon's behavior on its first appearance seems hardly in keeping with its demonic status. When Redcrosse and Una first spot the dragon it is engaged in noticeably unthreatening behavior: "stretcht he lay vpon the sunny side, / Of a great hill, himselfe like a great hill" (1.11.4.5–6). The

dragon is lolling beneath the sun's warm rays, not aggressively poised to strike. Several stanzas are devoted to the dragon's terrifying visage and bulk, but, as it approaches the knight, the tone of the poem shifts again, producing a markedly different effect:

So dreadfully he towards him did pas,  
Forelifting vp a loft his speckled brest,  
And often bounding on the brused gras,  
As for great ioyounce of his newcome guest.  
(1.11.15.1–4)

The reader has been led since the third stanza of the poem to anticipate the knight's eventual conflict with "a Dragon horrible and stearne" (1.1.3.9), but this is hardly what we encounter when the long anticipated, titanic struggle finally arrives. The dragon's behavior when it first appears is remarkably playful, making comparisons to domestic animals irresistible. It is first apprehended stretched out like a cat in the sun, and, once it catches sight of the Red Cross Knight, it behaves less like a malevolent foe than like a dog bouncing with excitement and anticipation at the sight of its returning owner. The adverb "dreadfully" is undercut by the ensuing lines, in which the dragon appears engaging and exuberant. It does not approach with implacable malice but with joyous hospitality.

Even this joy could bring its own horrors: it might be nothing but the grisly relish of a predator, who plans to play with the knight like a cat with a mouse.<sup>32</sup> After all, the description of bouncing delight quickly evaporates, and the reader is subjected to a series of stanzas in which the dragon's threatening characteristics are exhaustively and exhaustingly enumerated. But the ebullient mood that returns when the children emerge and play with the dragon's corpse retrospectively clarifies and amplifies the dragon's initial happiness. Spenser frames this threatening allegorical figure within a surplus of playful energy, and when his dragon enters it is glimpsed as a playful individual in its own

right, almost a character. The dragon delights in its allegorical function. While the reader has been waiting for it to arrive since the poem's third stanza, the dragon, we are startled to find, has apparently been waiting excitedly too, not only for the knight but also for the reader. Here, at the supposed pinnacle of allegorical and typological explicitness, we find an abundance of childish play—not only in the way that the dragon's dead body is treated but in the mood of its arrival—which the overt aims of the poem scarcely require and for which it can hardly account. Spenser accords the dragon pronounced pleasure in its ability to fulfill its allegorical function—"You're here at last, after quite a wait for both of us!" its actions seem to suggest.

In making this claim I seek to step beyond the argument that the literal surface of the poem can be enjoyed for its own sake, which has informed many readings since William Hazlitt's famous claim that if readers of *The Faerie Queene* "do not meddle with the allegory, it will not meddle with them"—a claim that he develops by comparing those terrified of the allegory to "a child [who] looks at a painted dragon, and thinks it will strangle them in its shining folds" (5: 38). What the reader experiences is neither blithe indifference to the allegory nor fear before it—and when Spenser's children, after all, play with the dragon they are conspicuously free of the adults' anxiety. Readers do not rest contented and unthinking at the literal level but both delight in it and wonder at their delight. Once the dragon is revealed to have been waiting for the knight and to rejoice doggishly at his arrival, the reader cannot resist speculating about what kind of creature it is. What are its joys and its pleasures? How does it feel about being a vast, malevolent allegory? How was it passing the time as it waited for Redcrosse on the sunny hillside, before leaping up and practically wagging its vast, terrifying tail? Did it get bored? Did it play its own dragon games? And, following from questions of this

sort—which are at once fanciful, extravagant, and inescapable—is a second set of questions: What does it say about me as a reader that I find myself asking such bizarre questions? What does it say about *The Faerie Queene* that it creates pockets of space in which such questions seem to emerge? Am I reading too much into the dragon's behavior? Or, conversely, might it be that I have missed opportunities to ask such questions elsewhere in the poem—passed unwittingly on invitations to play?

Spenser's playful moments provoke his readers both to bizarre speculations and to reflections on their speculations. We cannot know what the dragon is thinking, but even to find ourselves wondering about the inner life of this allegorical beast at all is remarkable. Oram has recently written that *The Faerie Queene* as a whole tends toward the comic, since "[e]vil figures die by the score while, if one excepts Una's lion, no character we care about loses his life" (50). But there are evil figures in the poem about whom we do care and who, precisely because they are not fully fleshed-out characters, possess the thrilling ability to exceed their assigned role in the poem's moral universe. We postulate inner lives for such figures, who at first seemed constructed from the most flimsy and tired of conventions, and enjoy both the extravagance of our own investments and the possibility that they might be wonderfully misplaced.<sup>33</sup> We cannot access the dragon's inner life, but the sense that such a life exists and remains opaque ensures our playful, shifting relation to the poem. Likewise, it cannot be known what sorts of games the children will play with the fallen dragon's claws, but the reader's exclusion from the details of their games opens new possibilities: that the joyous, bouncing dragon will live on in a curious fashion in the children's responsive and mysterious cavorting—much as a holy thing taken from a church and placed in a child's hands might thereby be imbued with unsettling and lingering traces of life.

## Conclusion

None of us making our way through *The Faerie Queene* can fail to wonder what it must have been like to write this vast, sprawling poem, to sit down each day and continue churning out its intricate stanzas. Since we know so little of Spenser's working habits, imagining them can only be another act of extravagance, one that few critics have dared to try. For R. W. Church, writing in 1879, Spenser "wrote what he must have laughed at as he wrote, and meant us to laugh at it" (qtd. in Nelson, "Spenser *Ludens*" 84).<sup>34</sup> Do we want to give in to this enjoyable fantasy of the poem's composition as pure enjoyment, or might it be possible to think of Spenser's own labors, like his reader's, as oscillating between struggle and delight?

This possibility can be illuminated by Michael Fried's seminal account of the powerful hold that certain artworks have on us, focusing on the depiction of figures who "exemplify . . . the state or condition of rapt attention, of being completely occupied or engrossed or (as I prefer to say) absorbed in what he or she is doing, hearing, feeling, thinking" (10). Fried explores in this context the painter Pierre Chardin's "depictions of children and young people playing games or engaged in apparently trivial amusements," especially Chardin's refusal to distinguish "between the pictures of games and amusements on the one hand and ostensibly more serious or morally exemplary scenes on the other." He remarks that, while a painting might seem by definition to capture an instant,

Chardin's paintings of games and amusements . . . are also remarkable for their uncanny power to suggest the actual duration of the absorptive states and activities they represent. . . . [A] single moment has been isolated in all its plenitude and density from an absorptive continuum. . . . Images such as these are not of time wasted but of time filled. (46, 47, 49, 51)

Fried's account can help us understand why the children absorbed in play in these paintings, like those in Edgeworth's sermons and *The Faerie Queene*, can be captivating—not because we understand their play but because we are radically excluded from its unfolding meaning. The absorbed play of the child in the painting prompts the absorbed play of the viewer before the painting. This does not mean that the two are alike, for Fried's argument hinges on the opacity of the child's play: the child's indifference to our presence, the impossibility of decoding its actions, makes the works compelling. In the same sense, I suggest, we respond playfully to the charged, fully absorbed moments of play in Spenser's poem. To make sense of this dynamic we need—like Spenser, like Chardin, like Fried—to reject altogether the false choice between the playful and the serious. But I would add to Fried's account that we must not conflate play entirely with absorption or delight, lest we misunderstand the moments when play is delightful: these must be seen as *moments* within the unfolding rhythms of play that I have been describing and that can also involve rage, anger, boredom, and frustration. These feelings too can be parts of our emerging response to an artwork. Reading *The Faerie Queene* is like playing not because it provides pure pleasure but because it can prompt a dazzlingly unstable oscillation between moods and modes—all of which we can understand as moments of play, the way a child experiences playing with a toy; the way Spenser might at different moments have laughed and labored as he wrote; the way readers might want at times to tear the book asunder (whether to destroy it or to locate its soul) and at times never to let it go. The inextricability of these impulses flies in the face of what have come to seem like obvious distinctions. As Adorno observes, "Work while you work, play while you play—this is a basic rule of repressive self-discipline"; this absolute distinction, he insists, destroys work

and play. “Only a cunning intertwining of pleasure and work,” he writes, “leaves real experience still open” and resists the bankrupting of both activities that arises from their supposed opposition (130). Spenser’s poem confronts us with this intertwining of work and play and still demands it from us.

To say that reading *The Faerie Queene* is like playing, then, alters our sense both of the poem and of play. In a sensitive analysis, Tzachi Zamir has cast doubt not only on the possibility of defining *play* but also on the damage that certain uses of the term can do: play is an “adult category that all too conveniently lumps together any disorganized, indefinable childhood state.” For Zamir, the behaviors that we quickly designate as play in fact allow the child “to linger in and enjoy a nonstructured experience,” able to be both “the subject that he or she is called to become and the disorganized entity that he or she is, one that is aware of experiencing the world but also of the gaps in such experience, moments of nonexperience” (396–97). We must resist the conflation of play with pleasure, refuse the demand that we (or our children) always conspicuously enjoy play, if we are to hold on to the thrilling instants of pleasure to which playing can give rise. The best response when we suspect that play is happening is not to try to define or understand it but to play along—which does not mean joining the game but playing responsively and in parallel, allowing our own responses and interpretations to shift abruptly, to remain mysterious, to animate, and at times even to damage what we play with. My account of play, of its unpredictable unfolding and its opacity, has attempted to do justice to this rhythm of structure and disorganization, experience and nonexperience, toil and delight. This uneven rhythm, which I still want to call the rhythm of play itself, animates the experience of reading *The Faerie Queene*.

## NOTES

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1. For *lusus* (“play” or “game”) as a term in Roman poetics, see Wagenvoort; for medieval accounts of poetic play, see Olson; Nelson gives an overview of Renaissance discussions of poetry as playful (*Fact* 56–72). Walton has made the most extended modern attempt to understand aesthetic experience through concrete forms of playfulness.

2. Suits ruminates playfully on the problems of defining *play*. Hurka and Tasioulas respond to Suits’s thoughts; see also Israel. The vast bibliography of works on play includes Sutton-Smith; Bateson and Martin; Brooker et al.; Hamayon.

3. On the Garden of Adonis as the font of “revisionary play,” see Berger 131–53.

4. For a discussion of this famous phrase, see Charles Bell Burke. Helfer shows that Milton’s epithet is less straightforward than it seems and that “[h]is Spenser appears to be not only ‘sage and serious’ but also witty and irreverent” (300).

5. Knapp 84, 86 and Hadfield also use the word *serious* in referring to Spenser’s trifling and gamesomeness. For earlier accounts of Spenser’s humor, see Watkins 293–304; Nelson, “Spenser *Ludens*.”

6. For an account illuminating this history, see Nicholson.

7. Greenblatt’s account concludes, “It is art whose status is questioned in Spenser, not ideology” (192). On carnival after Bakhtin, see Barber; Bristol; Laroque; Scribner.

8. On Nietzschean “freeplay,” see Derrida 263–64; Hans; Wilson. Goldberg links freeplay to Spenser in *End-lesse Worke* (10–11).

9. On this wider question, see chapter 3 of Brook Thomas’s *The New Historicism*, “Literature: Work or Play?” (151–78).

10. For the poem’s ability to produce genuinely new social and sexual configurations, see Goldberg, *Seeds*, esp. 71; and Gil 49–75.

11. In making this claim I seek to contest the pervasive and often unspoken assumption that the Reformation was grimly opposed to play. Baudelaire, for example, describes miserable parents who deny their children toys as “reeking of Protestantism” (19). Similar and influential accounts of Puritan or Protestant antipathy to play are offered by Huizinga, esp. 179; and Turner 71. Both draw on the account of disenchantment as the extirpation of

playfulness developed by Weber, esp. 104, 113, 124. On play and periodicity, see Kendrick.

12. General studies of iconoclasm include Aston, *Broken Idols*, *Laws*, and "Iconoclasm"; Wandel; Koerner; Simpson; Latour; Flood; Noyes.

13. Jarvis provides a subtle account of these tensions (56–83). Taussig enumerates the ways in which desecration can create new and unstable forms of power.

14. For the background to Edgeworth's conservative adherence to traditional Roman Catholicism, especially his dispute with the prominent reformer Hugh Latimer (who was later martyred under Mary I), see Skeeters; Wabuda.

15. The word *toy* gradually assumed the meaning "a material object for children or others to play with" in the course of the sixteenth century: the earliest citations of such uses given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* are from the 1580s and 1590s ("Toy," def. II.6), whereas the dominant meaning current when Edgeworth gave his sermon was "a thing of little or no value or importance, a trifle" (def. II.5). Campana discusses how some early modern commentators viewed poetry itself as a "vaine toye" (134–35).

16. Blench 122; K. Thomas, *Religion* 86; Orme 172; Aston, *Broken Idols* 181–82.

17. Knapp discusses this passage (118–19), and Aston provides an account of this wider polemical strain (*England's Iconoclasts* 403). Extensive glosses by "E.K." accompanied Spenser's poem from its first publication; the identity of E.K., who may have been invented by Spenser, remains a matter of dispute. "Babies" in this context refers to dolls; "Paxes" were wooden boards known as "pax-boards" that were passed around a congregation so that each member could apply the "kiss of peace" to them.

18. My use of "rhythm" and "coping" in describing this scene derives from Freer's account of it (551–52).

19. Stillman discusses the changing status of the toy for the child, drawing on the writings of Winnicott (51).

20. For more-standard forms of catechizing the young, see Tudor; Green.

21. On toys, materiality, and thinghood, see Brown; Johnson 163–75; Bennett vii; Gell, esp. 17–18, 97, 129, 133.

22. The account by Ariès remains the touchstone for all later accounts: see 62–99 on games. For a useful overview of the vast field of children's history, see Stearns.

23. Keith Thomas discusses this passage in "Children" (57). On Bartholomaeus's views, see Goodich.

24. Orme suggests that they were "small wax votive offerings . . . left in churches until 1538, when royal injunctions forbade the paying of honours to saints or shrines" (172).

25. Kearney discusses this pun (114–15).

26. Teskey expands on this argument in "Notes."

27. For erudite readings of the dragon's various layers of meaning, see Kaske; Nohrnberg 182–84; Lamb; Gless 163–70; King 129–45; Wofford; Barrett; Perkins.

28. On Saint George as both iconoclast and idol, see Barclay 90; Aston, "Iconoclasm" 272–74 and *Broken Idols* 401–44; Brotton.

29. "Account"; P. Burke 173, 216; Hutton 214–17; Purkiss 23–25; Lamb.

30. Teskey is right to note that "there is something virulently productive about the potential of this dragon." I disagree, though, when he writes, "Spenser does not quite say this, but I have the sense the dragon's body will turn to stone and become a feature of the landscape, a great hill" ("Edmund Spenser"). The partial reanimation of its body in play prevents such petrification.

31. These children and their play have received surprisingly little attention in Spenser criticism. Exceptions include Nohrnberg 197; Nelson, "Spenser *Ludens*" 93–94, 99; and Grogan 28–30. For the allegorical drive toward totalized meaning, see Teskey, *Allegory* 30.

32. I am grateful to Mike Schoenfeldt for this comparison.

33. See my analysis of Archimago's functioning in similar terms ("Forgotten Youth" 407–08) and my discussion of oddly intimate moments involving Talus, who, while not an "evil" character, is certainly one about whom we do not expect to care (*Feeling Pleasures* 138–41).

34. By contrast, Dolven envisages the poem composed in a mood of panic (12).

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# Secrecy and the Hermeneutic Potential in *Beowulf*

BENJAMIN A. SALTZMAN

Ne sceal þær dyrne sum.

Nothing shall be secret. (*Beowulf*, line 271b)<sup>1</sup>

**B**UT THERE ARE SECRETS IN *BEOWULF*—OR AT LEAST SOME SEMBLANCES of secrecy. One could, for instance, point to the reticent elements of the poem's style, as does Fred C. Robinson's seminal study of the poem's use of apposition, which is "especially rich in implicit meaning" and creates "the impression of restraint and reticence in the poet's voice" (4, 18).<sup>2</sup> One could point to the poem's numerous digressions and implied backstories, which, according to James W. Earl, haunt the poem with "unconscious meanings that the text represses" and form "its deep, uninterpretable silences" ("Forbidden *Beowulf*" 303; "*Beowulf*" 260). Or in a more traditional approach, one could point to the way scholars since the nineteenth century have embarked on what John D. Niles regards as the "quest for secret meaning" in the search for mythological and historical analogues and sources (216). One could point to scholars like Margaret E. Goldsmith, whose exegetical readings are interested in the "different kinds of hidden meaning latent in the poem" (3), or to the much more recent work of Helen Damico, who reads *Beowulf* as a political allegory, which "often does not reveal its hidden meaning" (23). Or we might just conclude with Andy Orchard that the "poem's mysteries" are somehow "beyond criticism" (*Critical Companion* 264). Yet in spite of our inevitable scholarly attraction to those mysteries, silences, secrecies of the poem, little do we actually understand how secrecy itself, as a culturally contingent concept, functions in the poem, let alone in the Anglo-Saxon society that produced it.

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Nowhere in the poem is secrecy as fraught as when Beowulf arrives on the Danish coast. “No her cuðlicor cuman ongunnon / lindhæbbende” (“Never have warriors come here more openly”; 244–45a), proclaims the coast warden to the Geatish troops, and yet he remains suspicious of their motives and intentions, demanding that they disclose their lineage lest they be considered “leass-ceaweras” (“spies”; 253a): appearances can certainly be deceiving (“næfne him his wlite leoge” [“unless his looks belie him”]; 250b). Beowulf responds diplomatically, describing his lineage as requested and then volunteering his purpose but not before assuring the coast warden of his commitment to transparency: “Ne sceal þær dyrne sum / wezan, þæs ic wene” (“Nothing shall be secret, I should expect”; 271b–72a). But Beowulf’s journey itself is already tinged with some uncertainty, a venture undertaken on mere rumors of a monster. Looking to the coast warden for confirmation, Beowulf continues:

[þ]u wast, gif hit is  
swa we soþlice      secgan hyrdon,  
þæt mid Scyldingum      sceaðona ic nat  
hwylc,  
deogol dædhata      deorcum nihtum  
eaweð þurh egsan      uncuðne nið,  
hynðu on hrafyl.      (272b–77a)

You would know if it is truly as we have heard tell, that among the Scyldings some enemy (I know not what kind), a secret evildoer, appears through horrible, unknown violence in the dark nights, disgrace and slaughter.

Working backward, we see one thing clearly: little is known about this monster, other than that he manifests his terrible, secretive, unknown violence in the darkness of night. We also learn that news of this “deogol dædhata” (“secret evildoer”) has spread abroad and that Beowulf assumes the coast warden would have more reliable, perhaps even firsthand knowledge (“þu wast”). The shuffle between the secrecy of the monster, Grendel, and the

various ways human beings might come to encounter him—through the spread of news (“secgan hyrdon”), through the monster’s violent manifestations (“eaweð”), through personal experience (“þu wast”)—is a contorted reflection of the coast warden’s interactions with Beowulf, who appears on the shore so openly and yet must still renounce any possibility of secrecy. As we will see, openness and concealment are frequently pitted against each other in the course of the poem: here, Beowulf’s open arrival (“cuðlicor”) and Grendel’s unknown violence (“uncuðne nið”) make that opposition especially apparent. Openness becomes clearly valued; concealment, clearly intolerable.

However, sometimes such concealment is treated as inevitable and beyond the control of human agents. In those instances, we find strategies of examination and discovery in the poem’s narrative that admit and even embrace the limits of human interpretation. Fully realized, these strategies challenge our methods of reading the poem (whether the formalism of Robinson or the psychoanalytic approaches of Earl, to take two starkly different, but influential, examples that posit some kind of textual concealment or reticence) and erode the agency required in laying claim to its hidden meanings. Given the recent concern in literary studies over the virtues and reliability of textual surfaces and depths, as well as the preoccupation with the relative closeness and distance of analysis, a turn to how the poem represents secrecy and hermeneutic examination adds another dimension to these shifting views on the task of literary criticism. Ultimately, recognizing these hermeneutic strategies and the modes of concealment that they address allows us to ask an important question: How can we—as scholars reading texts from the past, texts that to us carry their own secrets by virtue of their temporal distance and cultural alterity—take into account the interpretive logic built into the literatures that we encounter?<sup>3</sup>

Epistemological Limits and the Vocabulary of Secrecy

*Beowulf* begins with a funeral. As Scyld Scefing, the ancestral and honorable king of the spear-Danes, is ceremonially sent off to sea, the poet finds an opportunity to reflect on our collective ignorance:

Men ne cunnon  
secgan to soðe,      selerædende,  
hæleð under heofenum,      hwa þæm  
hlæste onfeng.      (50b–52)

Men do not know how truly to tell—neither  
hall advisers, nor heroes under the heavens—  
who took hold of that cargo.

By acknowledging from the start what cannot be known, *Beowulf* posits a past against the limits of human knowledge and the limits of its own narrative. The poem glances back to “geardagum” (“the days of yore”; 1b) and sparks a persistent negotiation between a pagan past, the Christian present of the poem, and an unknowable future.<sup>4</sup> Epistemology, among other things, undergoes a drastic change in the poem’s present moment of Christianity, a change that bears on the past and the future: if those who sent Scyld’s vessel out to sea could not know who might receive it, then at least (from the poet’s perspective) Christianity might afford us the language to imagine and narrate the various eschatological possibilities of his journey (Osborn 974).<sup>5</sup> But even if we understand death as a profound unknown, what is unknown—at least to anglophone readers of the twenty-first century—is not necessarily secret. To us, secrecy tends to imply a deliberate act of epistemological concealment, an act of keeping certain knowledge from others.<sup>6</sup> But to the Anglo-Saxons, there was greater semantic fluidity between the unknown and the secret, fluidity intensified by their belief in God’s omniscience: if God knows all human secrets and those secrets are fundamentally unknowable to human beings, then whatever is unknown to human beings (such as the afterlife) must be

known and concealed in some way by God.<sup>7</sup> To be sure, this description oversimplifies the theology and, more important, the ways this theology penetrates into the human experience of concealment during the period (for instance, in the possibility that one’s secrets could be revealed by God at any moment up to and including the Last Judgment, at which point they would be revealed to everyone).<sup>8</sup> Part of our assumption is, I think, informed by modernity’s separation of public and private that Michael McKeon charts in his magisterial study of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century emergence of domesticity, which seems not to have been as influenced by contemporaneous beliefs about divine omniscience. If it was, he makes no mention of it.<sup>9</sup> Even in its simplest form, therefore, this Anglo-Saxon theology of divine omniscience breaches that boundary between public and private, concealed and unconcealed. It requires us to readjust our assumptions about how secrecy works, which we can do by looking briefly at two particular Old English terms.

Typically glossed as “secret,” *digol* and *dyrne* are semantically versatile words; they move between various senses of secrecy and concealment, from the unknown and invisible to the mysterious and cloaked to the obscure and remote.<sup>10</sup> Their semantic territory is further enlarged by corresponding words in other parts of speech (such as the verbs *bediglan* and *dyrnian*). Although *digol* is the only term used to describe divine aspects of secrecy, such as the mystery of God (perhaps generally implying a stronger form of secrecy), it can be difficult to discern the discrete senses of these terms, especially when they are paired alliteratively (“*Digol*, Adj.,” defs. 3.c and 3.d). The poem *Maxims II*, for example, ends with an anticipation of the Last Judgment:

Metod ana wat  
hwyder seo sawul sceal      syððan  
hweorfan  
. . . . .

Is seo forðgesceaft  
*digol and dyrne*; drihten ana wat.  
 (ASPR 6: 57b–58, 61b–62)<sup>11</sup>

The Ruler alone knows where the soul must subsequently go. . . . The future is secret and concealed; the Lord alone knows it.

From this unequivocally Christian perspective, the poetic word *forðgesceaft* (“future”) describes the secret and concealed future after death (though known, certainly, to God); in *Beowulf*, the same word describes the fate that greedy rulers tend to “forgyteð ond forgymeð” (“forget and disregard”; 1751a) when they hoard worldly wealth. A difference of perspective leads to the same conclusion: the future is unknown whether divinely concealed or regally ignored. Indeed, that future is the same future that Scyld journeys into at the start of the poem and that Beowulf faces at its end.

What comes after death is clearly unknowable (*uncuð*), but in Old English poetry death takes on three distinct forms of secrecy.<sup>12</sup> The first is biblical: the arrival of death is secretive, for it will come as a “þeof þristlice, þe on þystre fareð, / on sweartre niht” (“terrible thief, who fares about in the dark, in the black night”; *Christ III* [ASPR 3: 871–72a]).<sup>13</sup> The second emphasizes the silence that death demands of its victims, as in the *Soul and Body* poems where savage worms tear apart the body’s tongue (“Bið seo tunge totogen on tyn healfe” [“the tongue is torn in ten pieces”]; ASPR 3: 108) so that it can no longer “wordum wrixlan” (“exchange words”; ASPR 3: 110a). And the third communicates the fact that graves conceal the bodies of the dead. To us, this connection is apparent in the etymology of *encryption* and *crypt* (both from Greek κρύπτω).<sup>14</sup> In Old English, the connection is implied, for instance, by *heolstor*: a covering that often connotes darkness, especially the darkness of an earthen grave, two prominent examples of which occur in *The Wanderer* (ASPR 3: 23a) and *Judith* (ASPR 4: 121a). This secrecy of tombs

is distinctly confirmed by the description of Christ’s resurrection in *The Panther*:

[O]nd þy þridan dæge  
 of *digle* aras, þæs þe he deað fore us  
 þreo niht þolade. (ASPR 3: 61b–63a)

On the third day he arose from the *secret* [i.e., place of concealment, tomb], because he suffered death for us three nights before.

Christ’s state of death and his tomb are metonymically characterized as a secret (“*digle*”) from which he has broken free.<sup>15</sup> This odd usage of the word works here because the scene of resurrection is so familiar. In *Beowulf*, the link between entombment and secrecy is merely anticipatory. Before his fight with Grendel, Beowulf thus announces:

Na þu minne þearft  
 hafalan *hydan*, ac he me habban wile  
 dreore fahne, gif mec deað nimeð.  
 (445b–47)

There will be no need for you to *hide* my head, but he will have done so to me, gory and bloodstained, if death takes me.

Beowulf survives, of course. And Grendel is the one who becomes concealed:

Deaðfæge *deog* siððan dreama leas  
 in fenfreoðo feorh alegde,  
 hæpene sawle; þær him hel onfeng.  
 (850–53)<sup>16</sup>

The one fated to die *has been concealed* when, without joys, he laid down his life in his fen-lair, his heathen soul; there hell seized him.

In both passages, death (or hell) seizes (or has the potential to seize) its victims: *niman* (the infinitive of “*nimeð*”) and *onfon* (the infinitive of “*onfeng*”) are verbs often associated with theft. In this way, death thus conceals (*hydan* and *diglian*, the infinitive of “*deog*”) its victims.

From the start, then, the poem grapples with the limits of human knowledge through

various scenes of death, anticipating Beowulf's eventual demise and the building of his funerary monument in the final lines of the poem: the barrow that would contain the hero's ashes would be "heah and brad, / wegliðendum wide gesyne" ("high and broad, widely visible to sailors along the way"; 3157b–58).<sup>17</sup> As a "becn" ("beacon"; 3160a) for those who journey by sea, the distinctly visible barrow thus inverts the unknown destination of Scyld's posthumous sea journey. But this beacon of visibility is preceded by several other unknowns. Scyld's journey is only the first (Orchard, *Critical Companion* 238–39).

Another comes with the introduction of Grendel: "men ne cunnon / hwyder helrunan hwyrftum scriþað" ("men do not know whither such demons roam around"; 162b–63). As with Scyld's posthumous destination, men likewise cannot know the whereabouts of those "helrunan" (hellish and secretive creatures, or perhaps creatures privy to the mysteries of hell: it is an ambiguous term) who inhabit the "mistige moras" ("misty moors"; 162a) and who are so peripherally central to the poem. Run, as Christine E. Fell has demonstrated, often implies *mysterium* in a Christian sense of sacred knowledge (211–14).<sup>18</sup> Here it is compounded with *hel-* to invert that sense: a *helrune* is a hellish creature who escapes the intellectual grasp of men and is at odds—both violent and rhetorical—with the hall counselors who sit "to rune" ("in confidential council"; 172a) yet cannot shed light on the mystery.<sup>19</sup> In considering "ræd" ("advice"; 172b), the counselors share with Scyld's "selerædende" ("hall advisers"; 51b) a struggle to discern what cannot be known. The emergence of monsters from their misty hiding places only gives the counselors a more urgent reason to try.

### Monstrous Secrecy

The *Beowulf* poet would have likely appreciated Kant's maxim that "heimliche und hin-

terlistige Feind erscheint weitniederträchtiger, als die offenbare Bosheit" ("secret and cunning enmity appears far baser than open malevolence"; *Vorlesungen* 436; *Lectures* 194), for the poet apparently knew the terror that such a concealed enemy—each of the poem's monsters embodies some form of secrecy—could wreak on the imagination of his characters and his audience.<sup>20</sup>

We have just seen how Grendel is associated with those "helrunan" who inhabit the moors in "sinnihte" ("perpetual darkness"; 161b). We have likewise seen Beowulf regard Grendel as a "deogol dædhata" ("secret evil-doer") whose "uncuðne nið" ("unknown violence") manifests in the "deorcum nihtum" ("dark nights"). Indeed, Grendel's raids are always nocturnal—"sweartum nihtum" ("dark nights"; 167b), "wanre niht" ("dark night"; 702b), and so forth—concealed by darkness that accentuates their terror and contributes to their sense of criminality, especially if we hold them to the early medieval legal distinction between murder and manslaughter: murder is committed in secret; manslaughter, openly.<sup>21</sup> This distinction later arises, for instance, in *Egils Saga* when King Eirik refuses to have Egil killed at night, "því at náttvíg eru morðvíg" ("because night-slaying is murder-slaying"; Nordal 181). Obviously, Grendel has no such reservations, each night committing more slaughter than before: "*morðbeala mare*" ("a greater murder"; 136a). Attempting to disentangle secrecy from the definition of *morð* ("murder"), Bruce R. O'Brien argues that the term generally refers either to a killing that cannot be compensated (*botleas*) or to one that entails treachery. But far from ruling out the connection to secrecy, the uncompensated or treacherous nature of *morð* links it directly back to secrecy in the poem. Not only does the system of compensation depend on the manifestation of a crime, but we are also told that from Grendel "nænig witenan wenan þorfte / beorhtre bote" ("none of the counselors needed to expect bright compen-

sation”; 157–58a). The concealed and nocturnal nature of Grendel’s crimes contrasts with the metaphorically bright compensation the counselors could have expected had Grendel acted in daylight. As for treachery, Beowulf himself refers to treacherous killing as something done “*dyrnum cræfte*” (“with secret cunning”; 2168a)—something we might compare with the insidious enmity that Kant perhaps had in mind. Grendel’s deeds, concealed by darkness, thus evoke the terror of the unknown and a category of violence disruptive to the social order because the violent deeds can be neither anticipated nor redressed insofar as they remain concealed.

This criminality of concealment is further evident in Grendel’s lineage from “*Caines cynne*” (“the kin of Cain”; 107a), which many scholars read as a Christianized explanation of Grendel’s exile.<sup>22</sup> After all, the poet explicitly states that “*metod for þy mane mancynne fram*” (“for that crime, the Ruler [forced] him far from mankind”; 110). Cain, however, is also “*morþre gemearcod*” (“marked by murder”; 1264a), and that epithet reflects not only the treacherous nature of his crime and punishment but also his secrecy. In his commentary on Genesis 4.8, Bede thus emphasizes the location of Cain’s fratricide:

[P]erfidia uero cain, in eo quod occisurus fratrem foras ducit, quasi in loco secretiori diuinam possit declinare praesentiam, non recogitans neque intellegens quia qui occulta cordis sui quae redarguit nouerat, etiam quo ipse secederet quid ue in abdito gereret posset intueri. (In *Genesim* 76–77)

Cain’s treachery is in fact that he leads his brother, whom he is about to kill, outside to a more remote place, as if he might be able to avoid the divine presence, without recognizing or understanding that He who knew the secrets of his heart had observed those things which he denied, and could also observe the place where he withdrew himself and what he was carrying out in secret.<sup>23</sup>

By this logic, Cain’s crime is undergirded and exacerbated by his fundamental misunderstanding of the divine presence and his fruitless attempt to conceal the deed from God. Not only is Grendel similarly pitted against God—he is “*Godes andsacan*” (“God’s adversary”; 786b), in one of many instances—but his secrecy is also characterized by a similar emphasis on its location. In response to Cain’s attempt to withdraw “*quasi in loco secretiori*,” God punishes Cain with exile; inheriting the consequences of Cain’s deed, Grendel must in turn inhabit a remote place, a *locus secretus*.

Throughout *Beowulf*, the poet emphasizes the secret places held by monsters. Men do not know “*hwyder*” (“where”; 163a) they roam about; Grendel flees in defeat to his dark hiding place (“*heolster*”; 755b); he and his mother inhabit a “*dygel lond*” (“secret land”; 1357b).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the dragon—Beowulf’s final adversary—resides in a “*dryhtsele dyrnne*” (“secret hall”; 2320a), and he likewise raids during the “*deorcum nihtum*” (2211a). Traditionally, serpents and *wyrmas* (the Old English word for dragons, snakes, and worms) tend to occupy *loci secreti* (“remote places”).<sup>25</sup> For example, in the *Liber monstrorum* (“Book of Monsters”), a text with several connections to *Beowulf*, the serpentine Chelydri are said to “*glaream ruris pro latebris . . . sectantur*” (“search the gravel of the countryside for hiding places”; “*Liber monstrorum*” 312). And for Isidore of Seville, snakes earned their name (*serpens*) from the way they “*occultis accessibus serpit*” (“slither in hidden approaches”; *Etymologiarum*, vol. 2, bk. 12, ch. 4, par. 3).<sup>26</sup>

These creatures are defined by the spaces they inhabit. Both Bede (in depicting Cain) and the *Beowulf* poet (in depicting the monsters) draw on a prevalent Anglo-Saxon assumption that criminals tend to behave secretly in forests, fields, and other remote places. Take, for example, law 20 from the code of Ine, king of Wessex (688–726): “*Gif feorcund mon oððe fremde butan wege geond wudu gonge 7 ne hrieme ne horn blawe, for*

ðeof he bið to profianne: oððe to sleanne oððe to aliesanne” (“If a foreigner or stranger travels beyond the road, through the forest, and he does not ring a bell or blow a horn, he is to be proved a thief to be slain or put to ransom”; “Ine” 98). Regardless of whether this particular law had prescriptive force when *Beowulf* was written and circulated, its underlying logic would have resonated: that furtiveness alone could prove (*profian*) someone a thief seems extreme (especially when punishable by death), but such a law rests on a strong cultural link between theft and secrecy. Isidore of Seville thus defines theft (*furtum*) as “rei alienae clandestina contrectatio, a furvo, id est fusco vocatum, quia in obscuro fit” (“the secret handling of another’s property, derived from ‘black’ [*furvus*]*—*that is, ‘dark’ [*fuscus*], because it takes place in secret”; *Etymologiarum*, vol. 1, bk. 5, ch. 26, para. 18).<sup>27</sup> Or as *Maxims II* gnominically puts it, “Þeof sceal gangan þystrum wederum” (“A thief must go about in dark conditions”; *ASPR* 6: 52a). With his characteristic “dyrnan cræfte” (“secret craft”; 2290a), a thief awakens the dragon at the end of *Beowulf*, as he steals from the secret hoard of treasure, “gehydde” (“hidden”; 2235b, 3059b) there by the last survivor and guarded by the dragon.<sup>28</sup> Yet no matter how concealed they once were, the treasure and the dragon’s secret hall will eventually be discovered, breached by the thief’s stealthy exploit.

### Hroðgar’s Secret Longing

We know that Anglo-Saxon poets often imagined the mind as a figurative treasure hoard of thoughts (Mize, “Manipulations” and “Representation”). But if such a hoard was also thought vulnerable to discovery (as the case of the dragon in *Beowulf* suggests), then the mind’s capacity to conceal and contain its thoughts must be similarly vulnerable. As *Beowulf* departs from Denmark, Hroðgar, the Danish king, seems to experience that mental vulnerability:

Gecyste þa cyning æþelum god,  
 þeoden Scyldinga, ðegn betestan  
 ond be healse genam; hruron him tearas  
 blondenfeaxum. Him wæs bega wen  
 ealdum infrodum, opres swiðor,  
 þæt hie seoððan no geseon moston,  
 modige on meple. Wæs him se man to  
 þon leof  
 þæt he þone breostwylm forberan ne  
 mehte,  
 ac him on hrepre hygebendum fæst  
 æfter deorum men dyrne langað  
 born wið blode. (1870–80a)

Then the king, good with respect to his nobility, the lord of the Scyldings, kissed that best thane and held him by the neck; tears poured out from him, the gray-haired one. For the old and very wise man, there was an expectation of both possibilities—but one was greater—that they might not see each other after this, noble-minded in council. That man was so dear to him that he could not restrain his breast welling. However, in his heart, fastened with the bonds of his mind, his secret longing for the dear man burned against his blood.<sup>29</sup>

As he bids farewell to *Beowulf*, Hroðgar puts on a powerful display of affective and psychological agitation. The internal experience of his “secret longing” somehow becomes externalized. This sense of movement between the internal and the external is energized by the wrenching series of prepositions that runs throughout the passage—“be,” “on,” “to,” “after”—culminating in the ambiguous “wið,” which could just as easily mean “into” (e.g., Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies* 82) or “against” (as I maintain below). The intensity is magnified by the verbs of force and resistance: “hruron” (“fell”), “forberan” (“resist”), and “born” (“burned”). And the force of those verbs is suspended by two central instances of “wæs” (“Him wæs” and “Wæs him”), which fortify the otherwise chaotic scene. But underlying these rhetorical manifestations of Hroðgar’s agitation is a profound tension between the king’s secret longing (“dyrne lan-

gað”) on the one hand and his externalized tears (“hruron him tearas”) on the other.

How, many have wondered, could Hroðgar maintain some “secret longing” if that longing is betrayed by the visibility of his tears?<sup>30</sup> I suggest that this tension reveals another important distinction between Anglo-Saxon ideas about secrecy and our own. Indeed, we tend to assume that secrecy is governed by the individual, that a secret is a possession one can effectively “keep,” and this assumption has interfered with our understanding of Hroðgar’s lamentation. We assume that because Hroðgar has a “secret longing” he must also have complete control over that longing; we assume, in other words, that Hroðgar succeeds at concealing his longing despite his tears: hence, the contradiction.<sup>31</sup> What if secrecy, for the *Beowulf* poet, was a much more passive category of experience? What if the tears are simply a physiological manifestation of that secret longing? What if Hroðgar’s control over both is limited?<sup>32</sup> What if, like the treasure in *Beowulf*, hidden secrets cannot forever remain hidden? And what if an exposed secret is still ontologically a secret?

Let us begin from the outside—with the tears that betray Hroðgar’s secret. The shedding of those tears is expressed with the verb *hreosan*, which generally describes movements of descent. But in poetic contexts it also tends to connote natural and inevitable descents, particularly with respect to bad weather and death. In *The Wanderer*, storms cause “hrið hreosende” (“falling frost”; *ASPR* 3: 102a), while in the opening lines of *The Phoenix*, paradise is where “ne hægles hryre” (“hail never falls”; *ASPR* 3: 16a). The storm metaphor evoked by Hroðgar’s tears seems appropriate enough, if only to emphasize the tempestuousness of his feelings. But in *The Phoenix*, *Guthlac B*, and *Andreas*, the formulaic phrase “lices hryre” also describes a different kind of fall: death as the “falling of the body” (*ASPR* 3: 645a; 3: 829b, 1093a; 2:

229a). This sense is clearly favored by the *Beowulf* poet, for whom the dragon’s defeat is marked by his “hreas on hrusan” (“fall to the ground”; 2831a): death paradoxically exposes his secret hoard of treasure. Furthermore, in the Finn episode, warriors “hie on gebyrd hruron” (“fell in accordance with their fate”; 1074b), and in a nearly identical construction, when Beowulf’s troop appears at the mere, the swarming monsters are forced to “hie on weg hruron” (“fall back [i.e., retreat] according to their way”; 1430b).<sup>33</sup> *Hreosan* is a fairly common word, but these examples suggest that it extinguishes Hroðgar’s command over his tears, which are as naturalistic as a storm and as fateful as death. Either way, the grammar of the line is in agreement: he does not weep; rather, tears fall from him.

Hroðgar’s tears have been variously interpreted as a reason to “widen our conception of the pattern of feelings in heroic life” (Chickering 348), as a “sign of his authority in Heorot” (Mills 172), and inversely as a symptom of his “distinctly non-heroic” impotence compared with Beowulf’s “masculine power and status” (Dockray-Miller 19, 16). The peculiar reference in the passage to his “secret longing” has played a central role in these discussions. Part of Mary Dockray-Miller’s argument, for example, depends on emphasizing “the emotion of the scene” (23), which she does by placing Hroðgar at the center of the action and reading “langað” as a verb (“longed”) rather than a noun (“longing”).<sup>34</sup> Dockray-Miller suggests that “the usual grammatical construction de-personalizes the ‘longing’ and lessens the emotional effect: ‘the longing burned.’ The more active, immediate translation of ‘the warrior desires’ conveys a more subject[ive], emotional intensity” (23). Yet no matter how often critics attempt to take Hroðgar as the subject of these clauses, the grammar refuses to comply. In the eight lines after he kisses and embraces Beowulf, Hroðgar is the grammatical subject only once: in the negatively constructed

subordinate clause “he þone breostwylm forberan ne mehte” (“he could not hold back his breast welling”; 1886). Indeed, in that clause we see Hroðgar’s explicit lack of control. In every other clause, Hroðgar is the grammatical object being acted on by forces such as his “tearas” and his “dyrne langað.” The instances of the verb “wæs,” mentioned above, likewise place “him” in the dative: for him, there was an expectation; to him, Beowulf was so dear. Perhaps this grammar only further confirms Hroðgar’s dwindling authority (as king, he should be directing the actions not receiving them),<sup>35</sup> but it also reveals something about secrecy as a psychological phenomenon in the Middle Ages: that it was often thought to act on the individual.

This belief is why Hroðgar’s secrecy burns against his blood (“born wið blode”). The burning manifests itself in the tension between the breast welling Hroðgar cannot resist (“breostwylm forberan ne mehte”) and the secret longing that he holds fast in his mental bonds (“hygebendum fæst”). These two psychological dimensions force a seemingly impossible paradox, emphasized poetically by the contrastive conjunction (“ac”) that separates the two. Leslie Lockett has offered a sophisticated resolution. In her reading, Hroðgar’s “breostwylm” does not refer to his tears but rather is an example of what she explains as a hydraulic model of mental activity, which was fundamental to the way Anglo-Saxons understood emotion. According to this model, the “breostwylm” is thus not an outpouring of tears; it is an embodied form of emotion, which can go on boiling while Hroðgar’s “hidden longing remains firmly tethered in the breast” (*Anglo-Saxon Psychologies* 83). Although Lockett argues that his longing remains “willfully constrained” (83), I propose one adjustment: the “breostwylm” along with the “tearas” (for the tears must be externalized) are the mechanisms through which Hroðgar’s “dyrne langað” becomes legible from the outside, making his secret long-

ing unconcealable in spite of his attempt to conceal it. Even if the tears are separate from the “breostwylm” (the separation is ambiguous), it is still possible for both the tears and Hroðgar’s physical self-presentation to betray his secret longing.

An image thus emerges in which Hroðgar’s body and secret are subject to a kind of affective torment; his secret works against his own blood in a process visible to those around him as well as, extradiegetically, to the audience of the poem. Here there is a faint, yet illuminating, echo of the logic of the judicial ordeal, a method for extracting testimony in Anglo-Saxon law when the usual methods (such as an oath) were unsatisfactory.<sup>36</sup> This convenient, albeit extreme, practice involved persons whose testimony could not be trusted (such as slaves, thieves, or perjurers); they would undergo a physical test (such as having a wound inflicted, bandaged, and opened three days later to reveal infection or health) designed to reflect the proband’s guilt or innocence, respectively.<sup>37</sup> The practice relied on a divine form of juridical intervention, which I do not believe is necessarily operating in Beowulf’s farewell scene; however, the practice of the ordeal does make the body present its own innocence or guilt against itself, rendering outwardly visible that which the voice of the proband was likely to conceal. The way Hroðgar’s body—his *tearas* and *blod*—forces the revelation of his inner secret recalls the way a criminal’s body might reveal that criminal’s guilt. In both cases, the psychological secret is made—against one’s will—physiologically legible.

### Hermeneutic Potential

If secrecy has its own kind of agency, then what heuristic methods might human agents apply when encountering instances of concealment? Sometimes discovery is deliberate, but sometimes it is inadvertent. In *Beowulf*, inadvertent discovery is often represented by *un-*

*dyrne*: a rare adjective that appears in *Beowulf* five times—more frequently than anywhere else in the Old English corpus (*Dictionary*). The word seems to mean “not hidden, discovered, revealed, manifest” (“Un-dirne”). But like the passive concealment implied by *dyrne* (as in Hroðgar’s “*dyrne langað*”), *undyrne* also tends to imply passive manifestation by some external force, such as the morning light that reveals Grendel’s violence against Heorot:

Da wæs on uhtan      mid ærdæge  
Grendles guðcræft      gumum *undyrne*.  
(126–27)

Then in the twilight just before dawn, Grendel’s war might was made unsecret to men.

Or the tales of that violence spread by seafarers, which are

ylða bearnum,      *undyrne* cuð,  
gyddum geomore.      (150–51a)

to the sons of men unsecretly made known, transmitted in sad tales.

This passive manifestation—as formerly unknown violence becomes known to a collectivity of men—is the precondition for hermeneutics as a communal endeavor.

The spread of tales and news is characteristically associated with *undyrne*, as when Beowulf returns to Hygelac and reports his victory over Grendel, whose terrors are by then “*undyrne . . . monegum fira*” (“unsecret to many men”; 2000a–1b). Even before he defeats Grendel, Beowulf informs Hroðgar that the monster was “on minre eþeltyrf *undyrne* cuð” (“known, unsecret, to me in my own land”; 410), despite Beowulf’s earlier reference to Grendel’s “*uncuðne nið*” (“unknown violence”; 276b). Finally, at the end of the poem, news of Beowulf’s death becomes “*underne*” to the neighboring Franks and the Frisians (2911b). With the spread of news, not only does *undyrne* highlight the communal mode of manifestation (like Hroðgar’s “*dyrne*

*langað*,” the secret is always disclosed to a group or multitude), but it also demonstrates the unavoidable nature of that manifestation. The Franks and Frisians would learn of Beowulf’s death regardless of whether it was somehow concealed by his people, just as we would learn of Hroðgar’s longing regardless of his attempt to contain it.

Even before the spread of news becomes possible, however, a more fundamental, naturalistic, inevitable form of revelation must take place. That such revelation usually happens at dawn is a tendency enriched by a tantalizing pun. On the banks of the Grendel-kin mere, Beowulf’s comrades await his return and observe a foreboding number of sea monsters, who

on *undernmæl*      oft bewitigað  
sorhfulne sið      on seglrade,  
wyrmas ond wildeor.      (1428–30a)

in the morning time often make a sorrowful journey on the sea road, serpents and wild beasts.

Morning is the time when these nocturnally concealed and secretive creatures (a classification noted above) become visible; it is also the time when the affairs of night are uncovered, producing the same “*micel morgensweg*” (“great morning sorrow”; 129a) that accompanies the discovery of Grendel’s slaughters as they become “*undyrne*” (127b). But here, as a technical term for the time between sunrise and noon (Tupper 160–64; “Undern”), *undernmæl* conjures a subtle pun between its root *undern* (“morning”) and *undyrne* (“unsecret”), evoking the morning in its opposition to the night’s secrecy and reflecting what may have been an assumed and profound connection between dawn and revelation.<sup>38</sup>

If *undyrne* represents such passive forms of manifestation over which human agents have little control, then the verb *sceawian* (“to look, examine”), which occurs nineteen times in the poem, represents a more active form of

scrutiny. This active scrutiny becomes the central mode of human engagement with mysterious and hidden objects: it is the hermeneutic agency we have been looking for. Between the morning light that reveals the aftermath of Grendel’s violence and the spread of news abroad (both represented by *undyrne*), Grendel’s footprints are closely “*sceawedon*” (“examined”; 132b). The prints are clearly visible, but they remain mysterious, demanding investigation. Similarly, investigation is needed the morning after Grendel has been defeated:

[F]erdon folctogan      feorran ond nean  
geond widwegas      wundor *sceawian*,  
laþes lastas.      No his lifgedal  
sarlic þuhte      secga ænegum  
para þe tirlases      trode *sceawode*.  
(839–43)

Folk leaders journeyed from far and near throughout the wide ways to examine that wonder, the tracks of the hated one. His parting from life did not seem sad to any of the men who there examined the tracks of the inglorious one.

Here, as elsewhere (983b, 1391b, 1440b, 1687b, etc.), *sceawian* describes the examination of remains (e.g., tracks, pathways, body parts, or treasure) left behind by monsters. What unites these objects of examination is that they are wondrous and mysterious, yet manifestly visible.

If, according to Patricia Dailey, the wondrous invites responsiveness on the part of the observer (452–61), then these objects invite that responsiveness in the form of scrutiny. Grendel’s arm is thus a “*tacen sweotol*” (“clear sign”; 833b) in the morning light, and yet it is later examined as a wonder (“*wundor sceawian*”; 840b): what changes is not its mysteriousness but the way the community studies it. Unlike the passive manifestation of Grendel’s violence evinced by *undyrne*, the examination of his arm and his tracks happens when people travel (“*ferdon*”) to see them in

person instead of passively receiving news from abroad. Only once the aftermath is manifest (*undyrne*) can the evidence be subject to such examination (*sceawian*). Once subject to examination, then tales of it can again spread, making the story *undyrne* to others, to those abroad or later generations, perhaps even to those who might someday come to write something along the lines of the following:

Hwæt, we Gar-Dena      in geardagum  
þeodcyninga      þrym gefrunon.      (1–2)

Listen, we have heard of the glory of the kings of the spear-Danes in days gone by.

The cycle of dissemination and examination (*undyrne* to *sceawian* to *undyrne*) invites hermeneutic scrutiny across geography and history, but that scrutiny at once depends on and enables the passive antithesis of secrecy (*undyrne*). If literature, and particularly narrative forms of it, often rely on tactics of concealment (whether those elucidated by, say, Frank Kermode or Fredric Jameson), then for the *Beowulf* poet, whatever is concealed must—before examination—undergo a natural and inevitable kind of revelation much like the arrival of dawn.

By the end of the poem, instances of *sceawian* proliferate even further. Mortally wounded by the dragon, Beowulf asks to examine the formerly hidden, now unguarded treasure. The examination is triply emphasized, as Beowulf urgently commands Wiglaf, his sole companion, to “*hord sceawian*” (“examine the hoard”; 2744a) and expresses his desire to “*sceawige*” (“examine”; 2748b) the ancient treasure himself; just before his death, he “*gold sceawode*” (“examined the gold”; 2793b). The examination then turns back onto the hero, as Wiglaf urges his cowardly comrades to “*sceawian*” (“examine”; 3008b) their dying lord. They find him soulless and “*wundur sceawian*” (“gaze on that wonder”; 3032b), just as they had gazed on the wonder of Grendel’s morbid arm (840b) and

just as they will gaze on the treasure grimly gained: Wiglaf proclaims that the “hord ys gesceawod” (“hoard is inspected”; 3084b) and then invites the warriors to “sceawiað” (“examine”; 3104b) that “wundur under wealle” (“wonder under the wall”; 3103a), as the wonder of the treasure coalesces with that of their dead lord, likewise “wealle beworhton” (“enclosed by a wall”; 3161a).

In the poem’s final moments, the dizzying perspectives (Beowulf looks this way; the warriors look that way) leave almost nothing concealed from the human eye. And yet at the center of this scene, Wiglaf reflects on why it has taken so long to discover the hidden treasure in the first place. A vaguely pagan curse had protected the hoard—hidden there by the last survivor, guarded by the dragon—and the poet translates that curse into Christian logic:

[I]umonna gold      galdre bewunden  
 þæt ðam hringsele      hrinan ne moste  
 gumena ænig,      nefne God sylfa,  
 sigora soðcýning      sealde þam ðe he wolde  
 —he is manna gehyld—      hord openian,  
 efne swa hwylcum manna      swa him  
 gemet ðuhte.      (3052–57)

The gold of the ancients was bound with a spell so that the ring hall might not be touched by any man, unless God himself, true king of victories—he is the protector of men—should allow whomever he wished to open the hoard, only the person who seemed right to him.

Regardless of whether we are meant to understand the curse as lifted by God’s will or paid for by Beowulf’s life, we are not meant to ignore the place of God in this process of opening and examination, a process reconfigured according to the Christian perspective of the poet. *Sceawian* is thus a hermeneutic form of examination, as when “hæl sceawedon” (“omens were inspected”; 204b) to see whether Beowulf should travel to Heorot or when Hroðgar examines the engraved hilt of the sword used to kill Grendel’s mother (1687b).

But *sceawian* also becomes a crucial process that approaches the mysterious without trying to uncover the meaning beyond what is already manifested (as is sometimes assumed in Hroðgar’s reading of the hilt) and instead strives for a humbling kind of interpretive awe over the object itself (the hilt is etched, its texture and design are examined, though its meaning—a scriptural history of the Flood—is only cursorily supplied by the poet).<sup>39</sup> It is a form of examination, in other words, that still partially lies outside the control of the practitioner. For the poet, God becomes the explanation for why *sceawian* sometimes fails and sometimes succeeds. The heroic investigator only has so much say over how it turns out. While other Old English poems might make this point more forcefully (such as Cynewulf’s *Elene*, in which Judas may know the secret of the True Cross and Elene may interrogate the Jews ferociously but only God can reveal the precise location of that ultimate treasure [ASPR 2: 66–102]), *Beowulf* negotiates the distance between a divinely governed mode of hermeneutics and a heroic one, just as it negotiates the historical and epistemological distance between the Christianity of the present and the paganism of the past.

### No Secrets

We can now return to where we began. When the coast warden suspects the Geats of being “leassceaweras” (“spies”; 251a), he unwittingly anticipates the very practice of examination that will later govern interactions between the human beings and their monstrous adversaries. So when Beowulf quells the coast warden’s suspicion by insisting that “[n]e sceal þær dyrne sum” (“nothing shall be secret”), he implicitly vows not only to forgo his own secrecy but also to examine and resolve that unknown violence (“uncuðne nið”) wreaked nightly on Heorot. However, it is only after the darkness of the night has subsided and the morning has revealed the effects of Grendel’s violence

(making them no longer “uncuðne” but now “undyrne”) that such active examination can ensue: of Grendel’s arm, of the path to Grendel’s kin, of the sword hilt, of the dragon, of the treasure, and finally of Beowulf himself. Despite his keen skills of examination and despite our desire to see Beowulf as a kind of heroic investigator, our hero has little effect in making those secrets manifest. His fight with Grendel takes place amid a darkness so dark we can barely tell the two figures apart: “lað wið laþum” (“foe against foe”; 440a). If Beowulf’s vow against secrecy is somewhat impracticable, then perhaps the vow is rather a gnomic statement about the impossibility of secrecy itself,<sup>40</sup> a statement that anticipates the inevitable revelation of Grendel’s violence as well as the scene of Beowulf’s departure from Heorot. His departure is in many ways an inversion of his arrival, but it also witnesses his denial of secrecy (“ne sceal þær dyrne sum”) fulfilled in Hroðgar’s failure to contain his own secret longing (“dyrne langað”), as tears fall from his eyes: “nothing shall be secret.”<sup>41</sup>

And yet scholars have often tried to uncover *Beowulf*’s secrets, framing our understanding of the poem—its style, its relation to history, its date, its manuscript lacunae, and so forth—either as a heroic task waged against latent referents and mysteries or, more recently and dangerously, as an aggressive calculation of probability against various philological uncertainties. But the secrets of a text—if it has any (and we tend to talk about *Beowulf* as though it does)—must in some way be governed by the logic of secrecy located in the text.

This suggestion brushes up against the issue of historicism, which Anglo-Saxon studies has tended to approach differently from later fields (Howe; Smith). In some ways, this difference reflects the failure of the new historicism in the 1980s to influence scholars of Anglo-Saxon studies the way it did scholars of the later Middle Ages, many of whom remain among its most vigorous and illuminating critics (e.g., Justice, “Literary History”;

Strohm; Nolan; Holsinger; Orlemanski). The difference also arises from the nature of the Anglo-Saxon literary corpus, the vast majority of which (like *Beowulf*) is anonymous and of debatable date: these factors are major obstacles to the kinds of historicism we find in early modern or Middle English literary studies. At the same time, few fields are as attuned to the historical nuances of a period as Anglo-Saxon studies has been over the past half century: the expectation is that scholars know the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* as well as they know *Beowulf*, while remaining aware that these are in many ways just as much literary texts as they are sources of historical knowledge. However, if we did have a distinct historicist moment, it came not in the 1980s but a few decades earlier in the form of a historicized approach to interpretation itself (Fulk xvi).

In one of his later essays (still a decade before the advent of new historicism proper), D. W. Robertson, Jr., advocates that texts of the past should be approached “in terms of conventions established at a time contemporary with the works themselves” without denying that such works are still “just as much a part of the present” (“Some Observations” 29–30). Robertson’s approach was caricatured and criticized by later historicists for its insistence that medieval texts should be read through a kind of Augustinian exegesis to enable the critic to come as close as possible to the mindset of a medieval reader. Emboldened by this brand of Robertsonianism, many students of *Beowulf* attempted the seemingly impossible technique, plying the poem with distinctly medieval (e.g., allegorical or symbolic) hermeneutic methods.<sup>42</sup> But those methods, we now realize, were too generically medieval. As Steven Justice incisively puts it, Robertson’s “disqualification of nonmedieval concepts paradoxically produced generalizing explanation of a peculiarly imperial kind. . . . [I]f you can only talk about the medieval cultural system in medieval terms, the conditions of

thought become identical with its content and the system with its governing discourse—in this case, Augustine’s” (“Who” 611). He argues further that when subsequent historicisms superficially criticized this approach, they fell into the same trap without realizing it; already in 1972, Stanley B. Greenfield had made a similar point, listing its “tendency towards reductiveness” as the most troublesome feature of “the historical approach” (by which he meant Robertsonianism) (9). In the interpretation of *Beowulf*, as elsewhere, exegetical (i.e., medieval, historical) criticism was inevitably displaced by more modern approaches—gender studies, deconstruction, psychoanalytic criticism.<sup>43</sup> We were temporarily liberated from its constraints but remained somewhat paralyzed by Robertson’s correct yet often unnoticed recognition that the critic has a burden to account for both past conventions and present attitudes. Despite their connection, the past and the present tend to obfuscate each other, producing the shadows where scholars have tended to locate much of *Beowulf*’s “hidden meaning.” Indeed, the poem even seems to anticipate our challenge: much like the poet who speaks of characters oblivious to the poet’s Christian perspective and its epistemological tools, we cannot now be expected to dispense with our sophisticated critical methods, distant as they are from the objects on which we put them to use. In fact, the limits of a poem like *Beowulf*—the limits of what we can know for certain about its historical context—offer us a unique opportunity to find not only a germane approach to interpreting the poem but also a link between past and present.

That opportunity can come from a consideration of how the poem presents us with specific hermeneutic assumptions in the way it handles the mechanics of secrecy. If, as Michel de Certeau put it, “the secret is the precondition for hermeneutics” (99), then by reflecting on the text’s treatment of secrecy we might come to understand its hermeneutic potential.

To be sure, such reflection requires sensitivity to secrecy’s cultural and historical contingency, for the notion of secrecy available to the *Beowulf* poet (or to Chaucer or Milton, if the portability of this approach were put to use) was in many ways different from our own and from those of other places and periods: a fuller investigation of Anglo-Saxon ideas about secrecy is certainly needed. Scholars of later periods have already begun to chart this history, whether, for instance, in late medieval approaches to confession (Lochrie, *Covert Operations*), the early modern theatrical tension between outward display and the interiority of truth (Maus), or the emergence of domesticity (McKeon). But until Anglo-Saxon notions of secrecy are also mapped—indeed, as a way to begin that mapping process while avoiding the insularity of New Criticism’s self-reflective formalism; as a way, that is, to move from here to there in our literary and historical reading—we might start by prioritizing the gestures and other expressions of secrecy in the literary artifact as sources of hermeneutic guidance. In other words, historicizing interpretive method may be a problem (for it lands us with Robertson at the four senses of Scripture, important though they were); however, as literary criticism now finds itself reacting—and searching for alternatives—to the way historical arguments (whether in the mode of Robertson or, say, Jameson) tended to bestow texts with the very terms used to make sense of those texts, it might be useful to consider seriously the logic of concealment in the texts we study so as to arrive at a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the constraints and opportunities that a given text affords to interpretation.<sup>44</sup>

What we discover in *Beowulf*, then, is that the poem has its own hermeneutic logic that stakes out the limits of epistemological agency. On the one hand, the poem suggests that some things (like Scyld’s destiny) are beyond human knowledge. On the other, it suggests that human agency is often

inadequate both to the act of concealment (Hroðgar cannot conceal his secret longing, just as the last survivor cannot permanently hide his treasure) and to the act of discovery (Grendel is concealed by night; his traces can be examined only in the morning). At the convergence of these two limits, hermeneutic examination becomes possible only once something concealed has been made manifest, as by the light of day.

In the face of this realization, our interpretations of the poem—of any poem—teeter on the brink of insignificance, demanding we humbly accept that making the unknown known sometimes lies entirely out of our control.<sup>45</sup> But our current reactions to the generations of historicism and to symptomatic modes of reading more broadly—as we test alternative theories of, say, distant or surface reading—have inherited from our prey a silent conflation of any distinction between what a work knows but does not tell, what it tells that we cannot hear, and what is simply unknown.

When we speak of *Beowulf*'s secrets, therefore, the connotative influence of those conflated assumptions—which overlook the complex expressions of secrecy in the poem, obstructed as they are by our critical authority—intuitively and subtly shapes our relation to the poem and the outcomes of our readings. And yet the reversal of such assumptions only becomes possible through a rigorous and responsible mode of interpretation that takes up the poem's unfamiliar hermeneutics—which may arise as a governing discourse of the poem or as contested forms of belief in it, possibilities we cannot fully know—and produces enough critical discomfort to foster productive encounters with the inscrutable, not merely the larger inscrutability of God's omniscience but also the much more heterogeneous, immediate, and unquantifiable inscrutability of medieval beliefs and the ways they play out in the texts that we read. The mode of reading I propose is therefore one that systematically incorporates

our ignorance and uncertainty by taking its bearings from how the works we study imagine the structure and genesis of ignorance and uncertainty. It invites a critical conversation about the limits of our analysis and changes the way we carry out our investigations. No one would suggest that we do away with the kind of examination and explication that depends on investigative (or, say, philological) skill and prowess, but as it turns out such prowess has only a modest place in relation to the secrets of the past and the future.

## NOTES

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1. Quotations of *Beowulf* are from the edition presented by Fulk and his coeditors, cited by line. Quotations of other Old English poems are from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* (ASPR), cited by volume and line. Unless otherwise noted, emphases and translations from these and all other works in the essay are my own.

2. See also Patterson; Duncan. But note Sisam's suggestion two decades before Duncan that the poem "depended on expression, not on silences, dark hints or subtle irony" (60).

3. Gadamer's hermeneutic that moves between the historical horizon of the text and the present moment of interpretation is similar, but it is not interested in the historically contingent meaning of interpretation itself (302–10).

4. Bolintineanu's "Declarations of Unknowing in *Beowulf*" further explores this theme in the poem.

5. This epistemological tension is famously rendered in Bede's simile of the sparrow: The appearance of the sparrow, which briefly escapes a winter storm by flying through a hearth-warmed hall, is like "this life of man," for "what follows or indeed what went before, we know not at all [*prorsus ignoramus*]" (*Ecclesiastical History* 182–84). According to the story, Christianity offers an opportunity for gaining that knowledge.

6. Bok defines secrecy as "intentional concealment" (5), though she admits an important relation between the unknown and the secret (9–10). Bull offers a helpful taxonomy of hiddenness with respect to various dimensions of perception and recognition: what is unknown is both

imperceptible and unrecognizable; what is concealed is recognizable but imperceptible; what is disguised is perceptible but unrecognizable (13).

7. This theology is found, for example, in Gregory the Great's discussion of God's knowledge, the limits of human knowledge, and the deceptiveness of the leviathan in his *Moralia in Iob* ("Morals on the Book of Job"; bk. 35, commenting on Job 42.2–3).

8. E.g., *Christ III* (ASPR 3: 1045b–48).

9. Lochrie's study of secrecy during the later Middle Ages also makes no mention of God's omniscience (even in its discussion of confessional practices), though Lochrie does note the important correspondence between human forms of secrecy and divine mystery (*Covert Operations* 136). I am by no means implying that people stopped believing in divine omniscience after the Anglo-Saxon period (cf. Nuttall's intriguing study of God as a reader of George Herbert, John Milton, and Dante), but the experience of secrecy seems to have become less governed by that belief and its immediate consequences (as exemplified by the discontinuation of the judicial ordeal in the thirteenth century); Locke's famous statement that "[p]romises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist" suggests a strong argument for the social importance of God as an omniscient arbiter (93), but the fact that Locke had to make that argument hints at the deteriorating effect of the societal belief in divine omniscience.

10. In Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, *dyrne* often glosses Latin words such as *abditus*, *clandestinus*, *obscurus*, and *secretus*; *digol* glosses those and numerous others, including *absconsus*, *arcanus*, *latebrosus*, and *occultatus*.

11. See also *Christ II*, where Christ is a bird whose flight on earth is "*dyrne ond degol*" (ASPR 3: 640a).

12. The strands appear elsewhere in early medieval thought, but I have limited discussion to the Old English poetic corpus.

13. 1 Thess. 5.2 and Matt. 24.42–44 refer to the coming of a thief.

14. The Greek etymology was probably not familiar in Anglo-Saxon England, but the concept was commonplace; e.g., Aldhelm writes of "*letiferum Romae draconem in clandestino criptae speleo latitantem*" ("the deadly dragon of Rome hiding in the secret den of the crypt"; 303; ch. 25, lines 25–26).

15. Squires suggests "on digle" but does not emend it (66); see also "Digol, Noun," def. 2.a.

16. The form "deog" is obscure (Bammesberger proposes an unattested infinitive *diegan* [137]), but it probably means "concealed" as a rare pluperfect form; see Wardale; Dietz 203–04.

17. On the "elliptical" structure produced by the poem's funerals, see Owen-Crocker 227–28.

18. *Run* has a predominantly Christian sense of mystery (Fell 215–16). Once *mystery* entered the English

language, *run* (with the sense of *mysterium*) became semantically redundant and underwent slight pejoration, coming to mean "whisper" or "secret." Fell does not discuss the compound *helrune*; but Fulk and his coeditors do (126).

19. Variations are found elsewhere: *The Wanderer* (ASPR 3: 111b), *Andreas* (ASPR 2: 1161–62a), *The Gifts of Men* (ASPR 3: 72–73a), and *Juliana* (ASPR 3: 609b–10a).

20. On the poet's use of terror, see Renoir; Lapidge.

21. Lockett notes that Grendel kills in secret, but when Grendel's mother kills Æschere, she displays his head as a legitimate (because public) requital of her son's death ("Role" 372).

22. E.g., Crawford, "Grendel's Descent" (1928) and "Grendel's Descent" (1929); Mellinkoff; Estes; Williams; Orchard, *Pride* 58–85.

23. For an alternative translation, see Bede, *On Genesis*. Bede is often used to elucidate obscure aspects of the poem: e.g., Orchard, *Pride* 58–64 (on Cain); Harris (on Heorot); Wormald (on the poem's intellectual climate).

24. On the mere as a "poisoned place," see Anlezark, 106–07; on the relation between place names and the remoteness of the mere, see Gelling 8–10.

25. On *wyrm*, see Thompson 132–63; on the dragon's habitat, see Rauer 65.

26. For an alternative translation, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 255.

27. For an alternative translation, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 123.

28. Andersson considers concealed theft in Icelandic law but not the thief's "*dyrnan cræfte*" in *Beowulf* (496–98).

29. I follow Fulk and his coeditors in their reading of the text: "*dyrne langað*" is a noun phrase ("secret long-ing"; 1879b) and "born" ("burned"; 1880a) is the verb (221). The alternative (Dockray-Miller; Wright) is less widely accepted but has been recently replicated by, for example, Hill (62) and the indispensable *Dictionary of Old English* ("Dyrne"). Dockray-Miller translates it as "secretly the man [Hrothgar] longed with blood" (17) and argues that "beorn" (manuscript spelling) is commonly a noun ("man, warrior") while "langað" is commonly a verb ("to long, yearn") (22–23). Fulk and his coeditors emend "beorn" to "born" (a well-attested form of the verb *byrnan* ["to burn"]), but even without the emendation "beorn" (third-person-singular preterit of *byrnan*) is not unattested: the Old English version of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* translates "ardebat" with the word "beorn" (Bede, *Old English Version* bk. 4, ch. 27, p. 360). Likewise, examining all the variants of "langað" (e.g., "longað" and "langoðe") reveals five additional occurrences as a noun: *Deor* (ASPR 3: 3b), *The Wife's Lament* (ASPR 3: 53a), *Guthlac A* (ASPR 3: 316a, 330a, and 359a). Moreover, the preposition *wið* commonly accompanies the verb *byrnan* (e.g., *Beowulf* 2673a) but never *langian*.

30. The question began with Wright 42–43. See also Mills 174–75; Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies* 83.

31. Mills, for instance, suggests that Hroðgar's sorrow "is not the passive, helpless grief he felt at Æschere's death; it is decorous, restrained" (175).

32. Clemoes suggests that Anglo-Saxons understood emotions as "essentially a force outside the individual, acting on him (or her) of their own accord or cooperated with by him/her as an act of will" (365).

33. The meaning is oblique: *weg* carries a literal sense of "footpath" but also the figurative sense of "a predetermined course" (in parallel with "gebyrd" ["fate"; 1074b]); see "Weg."

34. For philological details, see note 29 above.

35. Compare with Scyld Scefing, who was at first "feasceaf funden" ("found destitute"; 7a) but ultimately becomes a "god cyning" ("good king"; 11b) by actively conquering neighboring nations.

36. The poet's use of the term *bot* (see my earlier discussion of *botleas*) suggests familiarity with legal practice; for a general discussion of the Anglo-Saxon concept of *bot*, see Jurasinski.

37. On the ordeal, see Bartlett; O'Brien O'Keeffe, esp. 223–24.

38. The elegiac association between dawn and misery is often noted (e.g., Stanley 434–35; Lochrie, "Anglo-Saxon Morning Sickness"), but this pun remains neglected. *Undyrne* and *undern* have discrete etymologies (Holthausen), but the spelling of "under[ne]" ("unsecret"; 2912b) strengthens the pun.

39. Frantzen aptly notes that Hroðgar "offers no exegesis" of the hilt (347), but Lerer (158–94), Paz (247–48), and Christie see Hroðgar's engagement with the hilt as an explicatory form of reading; Near (323–25) sees it as a moment of subversive literacy.

40. This vow would not be Beowulf's only sententious statement; cf. "wyrd oft nereð / unfægne eorl" ("fate often spares an undoomed man"; 572b–73a) and "selre bið æghwæm / þæt he his freond wrece þonne he fela murne" ("it is always better to avenge one's friend than to mourn overmuch"; 1384b–85). On such gnomic statements, see Deskis.

41. *Sculan* (the infinitive of *sceal*) typically implies "necessity" (to be translated as "must"), but it "can also express what is customary" (Mitchell and Robinson, para. 210). It is often used in gnomic verse, as in the passage of *Maxims II* about thieves, cited above (ASPR 6: 52a).

42. Huppé; Goldsmith; even Robertson himself ("Doctrine" 32–36); see Lee for an overview.

43. Textual criticism and philology have nevertheless persisted as a central interest.

44. Best and Marcus offer a useful survey of these reactions and alternatives.

45. This interpretive humility can take various forms. Gadamer, for instance, was interested in the way philosophical hermeneutics is "not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our

wanting and doing" (xxvi). Ricoeur arrives at a similar suggestion: that the hermeneutic enterprise requires a "vow of rigor" and a "vow of obedience" (27). More recently, Love has approached modern literature through a sociological mode of respectful observation and description that grasps the limits of interpretive agency ("Close but Not Deep" and "Close Reading"). Miller reflects elegantly on the critical impulse to look for "hidden pictures" in Alfred Hitchcock's films or what Miller calls "too close reading"; in the process, he humbly registers a kind of Gadamerian inadequacy to his own brilliant acts of reading: "I fell into my discovery by accident, but like all accidents this one had no sooner befallen me than it acquired the fatedness of a thing waiting to happen" (124).

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# *Literally*: How to Speak like an Absolute Knave

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**L**ITERALLY. PERHAPS NO OTHER SINGLE WORD HAS CAUSED SO much trouble recently. It has become, according to Jesse Sheidlower, a former editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, “the word we love to hate.” And it is not only professors of English who are annoyed. Revulsion at the word’s misuse can be seen in countless blogs and sitcom jokes, and software engineers recently created a browser plug-in to detect and fix such erroneous uses as “I was literally swept off my feet” and “My head is literally going to explode” (Flood). The many people who are irked by such usages tend to blame the speech habits of the young and thoughtless. But the problem is not new. In 1926, H. W. Fowler complained of a newspaper headline reading, “The 300,000 Unionists . . . will be literally thrown to the wolves” (“Literally”). Nor is it always a sign of thoughtlessness. Sheidlower cites instances of the “misuse” of *literally* in Jane Austen, James Joyce, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, noting that as early as the seventeenth century *literally* began to be used as an intensifier of figurative statements. Given the term’s rich pedigree, we might take a moment to appreciate the remarkable linguistic feat performed by the first person to add *literally* before a common figurative expression. The sentence “My head is going to explode” is, in most situations, a metaphor. “My head is *literally* going to explode,” while not the literal statement it claims to be, is no longer simply a metaphor. Raymond Gibbs describes this kind of utterance as an instance of hyperbole, where *literally* means “in the strongest admissible way” (*Poetics* 25). Strictly speaking, however, it is an act of irony, since the meanings of *literally* and *figuratively* are antithetical and the speaker uses one in place of the other. This speech act manages to implicate many different tropes while insisting that it conveys nothing but the

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barest sense of the words. And your average teenager carries it off without a hitch.

We should, however, distinguish between what the hearer understands and what the speaker intends by using *literally* in this way. If the speaker does not mean to be hyperbolic or ironic, the hearer will recognize not a clever trope but a simple error. But what motivates this error? Consider the case of a speaker who does understand the difference between literal and figurative usage. Relating an anecdote from the relative calm of the present, the speaker might say something like “When he told me that, I thought my head would explode.” But in the heat of the moment that same speaker, desiring to convey the physiological distress of a tightening jaw and increased heart rate, might say, “My head is literally going to explode!” The speaker has not temporarily forgotten the distinction between the literal and the figurative but is in fact revealing something we all probably experience at some level—the sense that a dead metaphor cannot do justice to intense bodily experience. *Literally* becomes a way of signaling an unusual degree of investment in a metaphor that has lost its ability to surprise. With the addition of *literally*, as Arran Stibbe notes, “the source domain is made more salient and the expression more metaphorically active” (qtd. in Müller 190).

This kind of literalization can alert us to aspects of embodied experience that often go unnoticed in the utterance of dead metaphors. Beginning in the 1980s, with the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, interest in dead metaphors suddenly exceeded interest in novel or poetic ones (*Metaphors and Philosophy*). Linguistically dead metaphors, as Lakoff and Mark Turner argue, are in fact the “most alive and most deeply entrenched” conceptual metaphors (129). Conceptual metaphors are assemblages of what Joseph Grady calls “primary metaphors”—the basic cross-domain associations, such as “More Is Up,” that arise naturally from our sensorimotor

experience (*Foundations*). So, a dead metaphor such as “My head is going to explode,” while not especially poetic, is part of a system of conceptual metaphor composed of primary metaphors like “Anger Is Heat.” While conceptual-metaphor theory has been extremely productive in the cognitive sciences, the linguist Cornelia Müller rightly objects to the way that it “treats the relation between the collective level of conceptual metaphors (embodied in a language system) and the private or individual ways of understanding the world (thinking, speaking, acting) simply as unproblematic” (13). She describes metaphors not as “dead and alive” but as “sleeping and waking,” to emphasize that metaphoricity is gradable and that even the most seemingly dead metaphors can be awakened through the unexpected usages of individual speakers. Her arguments should remind cognitive linguists of what I. A. Richards long ago observed: “However stone dead such metaphors seem, we can easily wake them up” (101).

Like Müller, I will occasionally draw on theories of metaphor and the experiments of psychologists and cognitive scientists, but my primary examples of sleeping metaphors come from a family of Shakespearean characters I call “the perverse literalists.” Their high priests are, in the tragic world, the gravedigger from *Hamlet* and, in the comic, Feste from *Twelfth Night*. They operate in the worlds of their plays by taking their interlocutors at their words, insisting on the literal senses of their dead metaphors. In addition to challenging the assumptions of conceptual-metaphor theory, this perverse literalism is a powerful trope in its own right, one that has played a significant role in the literature of embodiment. Phenomenologists, cognitive scientists, and those working in the new materialisms have all found the awakening of sleeping metaphors helpful in combatting the kinds of dualism that hinder our understanding of the conditions of embodiment. Like early modern clowns and modern teenagers,

they ask us to think more deeply about what it means to understand everyday figures of speech in a more than metaphoric sense. What does it feel like to mean a metaphor literally, and what are the uses of this strange trope that insists it is not one?

The first obstacle in attempting to answer these questions is the surprisingly polysemous nature of “the literal.”<sup>1</sup> The courtroom scene of *The Merchant of Venice* offers a miniature drama of Shakespeare’s competing literalisms. Shylock is often cited as one of Shakespeare’s most famous literalists, though his literalism—insisting on the letter of the bond over more charitable forms of interpretation—is unsuccessful because it can always be undermined by an even more precise adherence to the letter, as we see in Portia’s triumph. Shylock believes in a perfect correspondence between the words of the bond and their real-world referent, the pound of flesh that he plans to extract from Antonio’s heart. As Harold Bloom notes, Portia “out-literalizes” Shylock simply by proving that no such perfect fit exists (44). Can he take exactly a pound, no more and no less? What about the blood that would inevitably be lost as part of the operation? Her literalism too encodes its own failure, since no literal term will ever designate precisely and without dearth or excess. But right between Shylock’s literalism and Portia’s we find the more interesting though less appreciated literalism of Antonio. As Shylock prepares his knife, Antonio tells Bassanio:

Repent but you that you shall lose your friend,  
And he repents not that he pays your debt;  
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,  
I’ll pay it instantly, *with all my heart*.  
(4.1.273–76; my emphasis)

Could Antonio, facing his own gruesome death, really intend this as a joke? I have never seen it played this way, on the stage or on film. The actor playing Antonio is typically wrought into such a passion that it would be difficult for him to signify any kind of know-

ingness. A coy smile or knowing intonation might produce more groans than laughs—as Titus does when he asks for help maiming himself: “Lend me thy hand, and I will give thee mine” (Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus* 3.1.186). The average theatergoer may not even register Antonio’s eerie literalism. “With all my heart” is a common courtly turn of phrase and has been used as such three times already in the play (3.2.195, 3.4.35, 4.1.146). A more interesting possibility is that Antonio delivers the line with no special thought or intention, as nothing more than a dead metaphor—only to realize just after, with a mixture of amusement and terror, the literal truth he had unknowingly spoken.

When a dead metaphor is literalized, the slightest distinction in tone can be the difference between the silly and the sublime. The more powerful instances involve a moment of surprise at the fact that dead metaphors can have a grip on the material world that the speaker did not expect or intend. Antonio may be able to overhear the literal truth behind his metaphor, but more often it takes another character to bring the speaker to this realization. Recent cognitive approaches to Shakespeare have shown the incredible range of their objects of study—from conceptual-metaphor and conceptual-blending theory to characters as sites of cognition, from the bodies of actors to the brains of readers and finally to Shakespeare’s own brain, and even to something like a linguistic life force working through it.<sup>2</sup> I focus on Shakespearean characters who reveal to others the literal truth of common figurative expressions. At their best they create in their interlocutors, and by extension in the reader, the surprise that Antonio experiences as he inadvertently wakes a dormant metaphor. Those who experience this kind of surprise can better understand the bodily nature of abstractions such as love and luck, causality and cognition.

Gail Kern Paster has explained that many of Shakespeare’s physiological meta-

phors were in fact literal statements in the Galenic philosophy of the humoral body, invoking Charles Taylor's claim that according to such a worldview "substance embodies . . . significance" (qtd. in Paster 36). But modern readers, more dualistic in their understanding of mind-body relations, are likely to find "abstraction and bodily metaphor where the early moderns found materiality and literal reference" (26). So when Desdemona worries that something has "puddled" Othello's clear spirits, the modern reader will take it as a figure of speech rather than a description of the impeded flow of humors that marks the onset of psychosomatic disease (61–63). While we may have no difficulty grasping what Desdemona means to say about Othello, her material sense "remains opaque and historically distant" (245). Studying Galenic materialism, Paster suggests, can teach us to see literal, clinical descriptions rather than metaphor. This is why her project takes the form of "an exercise in historical phenomenology" (11). She offers a valuable corrective, and much of what I will describe in the work of the perverse literalists involves a technique similar to Paster's, though mine differs from hers in an important way. It is not simply modern readers who miss the rich physicality of Shakespeare's language. Many of his own characters seem to miss it too. They make the same mistakes within the plays that we, according to Paster, make in reading them. So while Paster often assumes a division between the literal meanings of the early moderns and the modern readers' misprision of them as metaphors, I will follow Müller in stressing the gradability of dead metaphors and their potential to be suddenly transformed into facts of embodied experience. In the work of the perverse literalists, that opaque and distant literalism becomes clear and immediate, even to those who know nothing of Galen.

Perverse literalism is most revealing when the literalist is surrounded by characters who desperately want to escape from

their bodies, as Biron is in *Love's Labour's Lost*. As the play begins, the King of Navarre has gathered around him a group of scholars who devote themselves to three years of monastic study so that, in the words of Longueville, "[t]he mind shall banquet, though the body pine" (1.1.25). Biron, taking the body's side, tries in vain to convince them that what they propose are "barren tasks":

As painfully to pore upon a book  
To seek the light of truth while truth the  
while  
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look.  
Light, seeking light, doth light of light  
beguile. (74–77)

Biron's string of *lights* employs its key term four times with four distinct meanings. I agree with A. D. Nutall's explication—the mind seeking enlightenment doth the eye of sight beguile—though I would add that the final *light*, while implying sight, is the only one that means "light" literally (93). Perhaps no other single line in Shakespeare can rival this one in its emphasis on the gradability of metaphor. In ten syllables Shakespeare moves from the immaterial mind to the scholar's blind eye, as *light* moves step by step toward its literal sense. The light of the mind, seeking the light of knowledge, deprives the eye, the body's light, of light. Biron's trajectory from the abstract to the literal is a fit gesture for one of Shakespeare's great physicalists, who uses his literalism to point to the dire consequences of attempting to live "immured in the brain" (4.3.302).

The play's most impressive feat of staging comes in act 4, when the lovelorn scholars catch each other in the act of confession. As each new lover enters, the previous one hides, so that by the end Biron is watching the king watching Longueville watching Dumaine, who complains, "I would forget her, but a fever she / Reigns in my blood and will remembered be" (4.3.91–92). Dumaine employs the classic trope from Shakespeare's sonnet 147: "My love

is as a fever.” But Biron refuses to understand it as a mere figure: “A fever in your blood—why then, incision / Would let her out in saucers—sweet misprision!” (93–94). His perverse literalism is meant to make us laugh, but in the context of a play about a group of body-negating scholars it also makes an important point. Even the most spiritualized of loves involves heat and the quickened movements of heart and breath—physiological symptoms that accompany real illness. It reminds us of the grounds for the original figure, the living source of the dead metaphor. Biron’s case is similar to that of Othello’s “puddled” spirits, though here the work of materializing the metaphor comes from inside the play. Shakespeare’s own speakers disagree on how dead their metaphors really are, and the plays often dramatize such clashes of meaning. An understanding of the humoral body can indeed awaken readers to the physical senses of what seem like mere figures of speech, but at times it is enough simply to watch as Shakespeare’s literalists do the work for us.

Biron’s aside—“Sweet misprision!”—also reveals how much fun perverse literalism can be. For the victim, however, misprision is not always so sweet. Being held to the literal sense of one’s words can be a deeply uncomfortable experience. Lancelot, in *The Merchant of Venice*, dabbles in the literal arts. Discussing Jessica’s chances of salvation, he sees only one hope, “and that is but a kind of bastard hope.” What is this hope, she asks? “Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew’s daughter” (3.5.6–9). Jessica appreciates the skill involved in the act of unfiguring: “That were a kind of bastard hope indeed”; but when Lorenzo enters and becomes the victim of Lancelot’s misprision, he shows much less appreciation: “I pray thee understand a plain man in his plain meaning” (48–49). In the case of a dead metaphor, the plain meaning is not the most literal or physical sense but what Paul Ricoeur calls the “lexicalized” sense (290–91). “Bastard hope”

is not meant to call up images of children conceived out of wedlock. Despite his frustration with Lancelot, Lorenzo gives the “bastard” imagery one final, literalizing turn of the screw—accusing the clown of having impregnated a servant to whom he is not married. As in Biron’s string of *lights*, the three *bastard* images reveal a progression from the abstract to the concrete. “Bastard hope” is purely figurative, while the proposition that Jessica is not her father’s daughter is a literal though counterfactual usage. Only in the final stage of its trajectory does the term find its literal and factual instantiation. Through the combined work of Lancelot, Jessica, and Lorenzo, we see the performative thrust of perverse literalism, as figurative expressions seem to seek their own materialization in the world of the play. Characters on the Shakespearean stage should choose their metaphors carefully, for there is no telling when they may come to life—in this case, literally.

While Lancelot laughingly accepts the literal outcome of his metaphor, other characters put up a fight in defense of their figures. In the final act of *All’s Well That Ends Well*, when the disgraced and outcast Paroles asks Lavatch to deliver a letter for him, he observes, “I am now, sir, muddled in Fortune’s mood, and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure” (5.2.3–5). Lavatch, however, has little time for metaphor and is more concerned with the literal smell of his interlocutor: “Truly, Fortune’s displeasure is but sluttish if it smell so strongly as thou speakest of. . . . Prithee allow the wind” (6–8). When Paroles clings to his original meaning—“Nay, you need not stop your nose, sir, I spake but by a metaphor”—Lavatch holds on to his literalism, and his nose: “Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink I will stop my nose, or against any man’s metaphor. Prithee get thee further” (9–12). In describing how his luck stinks, Paroles, like Antonio, speaks more truly than he intended.

In all these examples, the literal sense is shown to have a grip on the material world

that the speakers do not intend to express. Such dead metaphors as “with all my heart,” the “fever” of love, “bastard hope,” and “stink[ing]” luck end up expressing or even bringing into existence the physical reality corresponding to the terms that were meant only as vehicles of a more abstract meaning. The realization that dead metaphors are grounded in the conditions of embodiment was one of the major inspirations of second-generation cognitive science. Lakoff and Johnson list dozens of examples. The primary metaphor “More Is Up,” for instance, comes from the embodied experience of seeing the quantity of a thing physically rise as it grows, just as “Intimacy Is Closeness” comes from the infantile experience of associating warmth and care with the proximity of the maternal body (*Philosophy* 50–51). As we develop we learn to extend these terms beyond the original experience, so that it becomes possible to claim that the stock market is “up” or that I am “close” to someone who lives in Moscow. But while they claim that these conceptual metaphors are grounded in the experiences of bodies interacting with their lived environments, Lakoff and Johnson often caution us that these are only metaphors and that they “can get us into silliness if we take them literally” (168). But if they arise out of embodied experience, how does that literal and physical experience disappear so completely with the rise of conceptual metaphor?

Let us return to Paroles and his stinking luck. The joke here is based on the primary metaphor “Bad Is Stinky,” which derives from the “correlation between evaluative and olfactory experience” that occurs when someone is “repelled by foul-smelling objects” (50). When we learn to say, “This movie stinks,” we sever the connection between the concept and its sensorimotor grounds, allowing it to range over a wider experiential field. Raphael Lyne follows Lakoff and Johnson in speculating that the “implicit aspiration of a cognitive metaphor might be to become part of every-

day speech, rather than to remain arresting and outstanding” (11). But Shakespeare often goes out of his way to foreground the original experiential correlation and to make the metaphor once again “arresting”—something that makes us stop and interrogate its lost material ground. Grady’s work on primary metaphors offers a helpful extension of Lakoff and Johnson’s theory on this point. Grady distinguishes between metaphors based on resemblance, such as “Achilles Is a Lion,” and those based on correlation, such as “Anger Is Heat” (“Typology”). The former join two domains according to a common feature rather than any experiential link, while the latter “[involve] a tight correlation between two dimensions of experience—typically with one more related to sensory input than the other” (84). Most primary metaphors, he argues, are correlational and are closer to metonymies than to metaphors.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the primary scenes they draw on recur in ways that recall the metaphors’ physical ground. Movies and ideas may be said to stink if they are not successful, but a bad meal can stink in the literal and metaphoric senses. Ted Cohen calls these “twice-true metaphors,” while Gibbs prefers to call them “isomorphic” idioms: “Thus, skating on thin ice has both a literal and a figurative meaning in a situation where someone is skating on thin ice” (*Poetics* 96). In the case of Paroles, the correlative link verges on a causal one, because his bad fortune is directly responsible for his all-too-literal stench.

This perverse literalism is a great source of Shakespearean comedy. But what exactly makes it so funny? Is it the same kind of humor found, for example, in Alexander Pope’s zeugmas? When we learn in *The Rape of the Lock* that Belinda may “stain her Honour, or her new Brocade,” it is the juxtaposition of the serious and the trivial, the quick move from the metaphoric to the literal staining, that creates such delectable bathos (2.107). But while Shakespeare’s perverse literalists make

us laugh, it is not because they juxtapose serious abstractions with material trifles. At their best, they reveal the continuities between the two—that love is like a fever because of some common physical symptoms, or that when your luck stinks it is not unlikely, in early modern England, that you will stink along with it. Though she does not mention Pope, Paster reveals a subtle difference between him and Shakespeare when she discusses Hamlet's description of Pyrrhus as "roasted in wrath and fire" (28). A modern reader might be amused at the quick deflation of the metaphoric to the literal sense of "roasted." But this would be to miss the more literal sense of "roasting in wrath" that the Elizabethan theatergoer would hear—the "dispositional mini-environment" of the body's humors that burns in a sense not altogether different from a real fire (44). While the Popean zeugma is a perfectly controlled act of deflation, Shakespeare's perverse literalism stages a struggle between the two senses, in which the literal somehow comes out on top. In the hands of Shakespeare's master literalists, the gravedigger and Feste, this tension is able to produce not only laughs but also profound insights into the conditions of embodiment.

I have noted that the technique is particularly effective in plays whose major characters live the life of the mind. In his opening speech Hamlet claims to have "that within which passeth show," and as the play develops he continues to guard the heart of his mystery (1.2.85). It is only in the final act that Hamlet stops speaking in soliloquy and engages with the material world—a change brought about in large part by the gravedigger. The confusion begins with their first exchange: "Whose grave's this, sirrah?" "Mine, sir" (5.1.107–09). Hamlet inquires about the grave's final cause but receives an answer in terms of efficient and material ones. He recognizes that he has finally met his conversational match. "How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (126–27).

George Kittredge glossed Hamlet's "absolute" as "insistent on accuracy in language" (147). But it is a peculiar kind of accuracy the gravedigger seeks—one that insists on literal meanings when the abstract alone seems to make sense.

The gravedigger's greatest act of absolute knavery comes in discussing the prince's madness. "How came he mad?" Hamlet asks, only to receive the tautological "Faith, e'en with losing his wits." Endeavoring to speak by the card, or with clearly defined terms, he tries again: "Upon what ground?" The gravedigger, at his literal best, answers, "Why, here in Denmark" (5.1.144–49). Hamlet demands a cause, a formal reason for his madness; but the gravedigger responds with a place. What might seem an evasion of the question is in fact a deeper answer than Hamlet could have expected. It was rotten Denmark, and seedy Elsinore in particular—with its paranoia, surveillance, and acoustic violence—that was the breeding ground of Hamlet's madness. His question contained its own answer; he had only to reinterpret his "ground" more literally to understand the relation of his mind to his environment. The question of madness is best answered in terms not of formal or final causes but of material ones. The gravedigger shows him that "Why did I go mad?" is a less useful question than "Where did I go mad?"

His absolute knavery takes us well beyond the realm of the "twice-true metaphor." It is not that *ground* means two things simultaneously—cause and physical ground. Hamlet intends only the abstract sense and the gravedigger only the literal. Nor is it a question of historical phenomenology, whereby our cultural assumptions do not allow us to hear a literal sense that Shakespeare's audience would have heard. Hamlet does not hear his own material meaning, and it takes this act of perverse literalism to make him really listen. In a fascinating chapter of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant discusses the difference between schematic representation,

where an intuition is immediately given to a concept, and the symbolic, where no sensible intuition is available and the understanding must proceed by analogy. "Our language is full of such indirect presentations," he claims, and the first example he cites is "*Grund*" (226). Kant notes that the problem "deserves a deeper investigation," which was later carried out by Martin Heidegger in *Der Satz vom Grund*, a published series of thirteen lectures. The title is virtually untranslatable. It has been rendered as both *The Principle of Reason* and *The Principle of Ground*—understandably, as Heidegger meditates throughout on both senses of *Grund* and their strange points of collusion.<sup>4</sup> Reginald Lilly's solution is to translate *Grund* as "reason" in the first several lectures, then to gravitate toward "ground," finally using "ground/reason" to ensure that the reader hears both simultaneously.

Heidegger explores this historical doubleness of *Grund*—"ground" as footing and earth and "Reason" as perception and hearing—to understand how being can be ground-like (102). His inquiry leads him, in the sixth lecture, to consider the relation of metaphor and metaphysics. The idea of metaphor "is based upon the distinguishing, if not complete separation, of the sensible and the nonsensible as two realms that subsist on their own. The setting up of this partition between the sensible and the nonsensible, between the physical and the nonphysical is a basic trait of what is called metaphysics and which normatively determines Western thinking." Heidegger claims that the "metaphorical exists only within metaphysics" and that we can undermine both by realizing that this partition between the physical and nonphysical is "insufficient" (48). At their best, this is what Shakespeare's masters of misprision urge us to consider when they awaken the sleeping material truths in everyday figures of speech. But Heidegger's inquiry, like Paster's, is an exercise in historical phenomenology. It relies on listening to the subtle

modulations of meaning across centuries, from the Greeks and Romans to early modern and modern Europeans. When Shakespeare stages his own inquiry into "ground," he condenses it into an instant—a sudden clash between Hamlet's abstract causes and the dirt the gravedigger hurls with his spade.

Hamlet's interaction with the gravedigger is framed by the rethinking of the physical's relation to the nonphysical. As Hamlet and Horatio come upon the men at work, Hamlet asks if one of them, who is singing while he digs, has "no feeling of his business"; Horatio replies, "Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness" (5.1.61–63). The gravediggers have built up a kind of mental resistance to death, analogous to the physical resistance of a tanner's body, which, the gravedigger explains, lasts a year longer than anyone else's, since "his hide is so tanned with his trade that a will keep out water a great while" (157–58). Mary Crane remarks, "Like the gravediggers themselves, only in a more fundamental way, the tanner has been shaped by his occupation" (144). Hamlet wanted desperately to know where we go when we shuffle off this mortal coil. The gravedigger is more interested in the fate of the coil. Crane's description, "in a more fundamental way," echoes the gravedigger's wisdom in pointing us back to the material ground that shapes our living interactions with the world and apparently our dead ones as well.

In the work of these clowns, the act of meaning something "literally" becomes a trope in its own right—a way of turning back to the material world whose links with our figures of speech have become severed. On its surface this sounds a bit like Donald Davidson's claim that "metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more" (32). But Davidson's focus on the literal meaning of metaphors is merely a first step in the metaphoric process, in which that patent falsity of the literal inaugurates a search for alternative

ways of noticing the world. Davidson, that is, rejects Richards's notion that metaphor involves two terms that share a common "ground" and removes them from the realm of truth-conditional statements. Shakespeare's literalists agree with Davidson in rejecting the idea that metaphors are grounded in similarity, but they insist that metaphors do contain truths and that those truths reside on the level of the literal. In literalizing Hamlet's "ground," the gravedigger rejects the idea of a cognitive space joining two dissimilar experiences. He wants to see how much the literal can do on its own, to what extent substance can embody significance in a manner closer to metonymy than to the less grounded substitutions of metaphor.

I have claimed that the products of perverse literalism range from the silly to the sublime—from the groan-worthy pun to the existential thrill of realizing that we have been speaking more truly than we intended in our everyday figures of speech. I should add that within the category of the sublime we can distinguish between tragic and comic instances. The melancholy prince may be wiser for his interaction with the gravedigger, but he is not happier. To some extent, one's response to perverse literalism depends on one's view of matter and its capabilities. When Hamlet loses his belief in the internal thing that "passeth show," he is left contemplating only lifeless remains—the inglorious ends of Alexander, Caesar, and Yorick. He leaps from the life of the mind to the corpse without pausing to explore the middle ground of the thinking body that is the focus of much work in phenomenology, the cognitive sciences, and the new materialisms. I will end with the comic master of perverse literalism, *Twelfth Night's* Feste, who reveals better than any of Shakespeare's other clowns the profound joys of the literal arts.

Feste announces his status as a professional literalist by insisting that he is not Lady Olivia's fool but her "corrupter of words"

(3.1.31). His interaction with Viola in the third act is a master class in misprision. When Viola asks if he lives by his tabor, Feste replies, "No, sir, I live by the church" (3). Viola then reasonably asks if he is a churchman, but Feste tells her, "No such matter, sir. I do live by the church for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church" (5–6). As in the gravedigger's "ground," the joke is in the spatial jolt—the sudden shift from the ablative to the locative sense of *by*. Unlike Hamlet, Viola seems to enjoy this perverse literalism: "So thou mayst say the king lies by a beggar if a beggar dwell near him, or the church stands by thy tabor if thy tabor stand by the church" (7–9). Feste is excited by her progress: "You have said, sir. To see this age!—A sentence is but a cheverel glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward." (10–12). Feste's glove is a fit emblem for the kind of literalism he practices. In the hands of the perverse literalist, common figures of speech are turned inside out, foregrounding their physical and spatial senses.

To thank Feste, Viola gives him a coin, and then, after some additional begging, another. He then tells her, "My lady is within, sir. I will conster to them whence you come. Who you are and what you would are out of my welkin—I might say 'element', but the word is over-worn" (49–52). What does Feste do here in replacing the common figure of speech "out of my element" with the unheard-of "out of my welkin"? *Welkin*, as the editors of *The Norton Shakespeare* note, is "synonymous with one meaning of 'element,'" the physical sense of air or sky, but not with its more abstract sense (1794n7). At some point, "out of my element" must have been a strange, living metaphor, as seemingly incongruous as "out of my welkin." But common usage has worn away that strangeness and the now lexicalized phrase has taken on its own proper meaning. Both Jacques Derrida and Ricoeur describe this process as the *Aufhebung* moment of metaphor—when terms

originally drawn from the sensible realm take on a proper spiritual meaning (Derrida 25; Ricoeur 285–86). “*Begreifen*,” to understand, becomes a philosophical concept only by losing its sense of physical grasping (*greifen*); or, as Ricoeur puts it, turning to the French equivalent of *begreifen*, “‘Comprendre’ can have a proper philosophical sense because we no longer hear ‘prendre’ in it” (293). Ricoeur follows Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in seeing the loss of the physical dimension of a term’s meaning as a positive move. The wearing away of a sensible term creates new meaning in the raising up of the concept. *Element*, no longer tethered to the material world, is free to signify a number of abstract ideas. But Derrida is more interested in the process of wearing away, as was Friedrich Nietzsche when he wrote that truths were merely “metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigor, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer as coins” (146). The job of a literalist like Feste is to remind us that our abstract concepts are indeed human coinage, by recalling the sensuous stamp that has been worn away. One way of doing this, as Ricoeur notes, is to substitute for the overworn word a “synonym that suggests an image” (292)—as Feste does when he replaces “element” with “welkin.” This is how the corrupter of words earns his keep, and his coins.

I have described this scene as a master class in misprision, and Viola gives every indication of being a quick study. In her opening exchange with Feste, the word *stand* appears three times—the house “stands” by the church, and the church “stands” by the tabor if the tabor “stand[s]” by the church. In each iteration the emphasis is on the literal standing forth of the object. When Viola replies to Feste’s request for more coinage with “I understand you, sir,” she inaugurates a shift from “stand” to “understand” that is crucial to the next part of the scene, where Viola takes over as corrupter of words in her interaction

with Sir Toby. When Sir Toby invites Viola to enter and meet with Olivia, she replies, “I am bound to your niece, sir: I mean she is the list of my voyage” (3.1.69–70). She is bound to Olivia, not by contract or loyalty, but in the spatial sense that Olivia is the destination of her journey. Sir Toby then tells her, “Taste your legs, sir, put them to motion,” to which Viola replies, “My legs do better understand me, sir, than I understand what you mean by bidding me taste my legs” (3.1.71–73). Viola refuses the figurative extension of the term by pointing to the greater certainty of the literal: *My legs understand me*, she insists; *they stand under me*, but *I in no way stand under what you’ve said*. She insists on hearing the *stand* in *understand*. The average English speaker may use *understand* thousands of times without hearing its physical grounding, but even one perverse usage is enough to awaken this sense, as when John Bunyan writes, “I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible than I could well tell how to stand under” (93). In the case of the compound English word it is enough to reverse its two components, to turn the glove inside out, and to reveal the stamp worn away by common speech.

The primary metaphor linking physical manipulation with understanding is, according to Eve Sweetser, “absolutely pervasive” (28). It belongs to a larger semantic system she calls the “Mind-as-Body Metaphor,” which is “very probably *motivated* by correlations between our external experience and our internal emotional and cognitive states” (30). She notes, for example, how “bright colors do indeed help promote ‘bright’ moods” (29). But Sweetser rightly adds that the metaphoric mappings become fuller and more complex than the original correlations. Not all complex cognitive experiences can simply be reduced to some extension of the physical; rather, an experiential correlation can sometimes be awakened, by accident or wit, and then used to measure and even restrain its metaphoric extensions. Feste and the

gravedigger return metaphors to their experiential grounds, insisting that they stand or fall by how true they are to the embodied experiences that give rise to them.

These literalists' work is "perverse" because it resists the ability of metaphor to elaborate concepts that are not tied to the workings of the body. But recent studies suggest that, to the extent that they succeed, Shakespeare's clowns are tapping into something that occurs naturally, though unconsciously, in the processing of metaphors. Benjamin Bergen describes an experiment by psychologists at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in which subjects were first trained to perform certain actions, such as swallowing or making a grasping motion, when a symbol appeared on a screen (199–201). The subjects were then shown metaphoric phrases and told to press the space bar on a keyboard when they understood them. Comprehension was faster when the metaphors corresponded with actions just performed. So "swallow your pride" was easier to understand after subjects had made the swallowing action and "grasp the concept" after they had performed the grasping motion. Results were the same even when the subjects were asked not to perform but merely to imagine performing those actions. Bergen concludes, "Perhaps you interpret metaphorical language quasi-literally—rendering the concrete things and actions it describes in embodied simulations that you use in understanding the actual abstract concepts" (199). Perhaps, too, we should rethink Ricoeur's claim that we no longer hear the *prendre* in *comprendre*. Gibbs writes that "when hearing 'grasp the concept' listeners engage in, or imagine engaging in, a relevant body action, such as grasping, that facilitates metaphorical construal of the abstract notion of 'concept' as a kind of physical entity, such that concepts can indeed be things that are grasped, held on to, dropped, misplaced, chewed on, and so on" ("Metaphor Interpretation" 441–42).

Other studies yield even more surprising results. The psychologists Nils Jostmann, Daniël Lakens, and Thomas W. Schubert ran a series of experiments investigating the connection between conceptual importance and physical heaviness. In one of them, subjects asked to guess the value of various currencies were more likely to give high estimates when holding a heavy clipboard and low estimates when holding a light one. Variations on the experiment yielded similar results, leading the psychologists to speculate on the "intriguing possibility . . . that the abstract concept of importance is still grounded in sensory experiences of weight" (1169). Along similar lines, Bergen discusses the "ingenious study" of Lawrence Williams and John Bargh, in which subjects were asked to make a judgment about the friendliness of an imaginary person: "They found that people who were given physically warm cups of coffee thought that the imaginary person was more generous, happy, and sociable—attributes that are described in terms of warmth—but not stronger or more honest, which are not described in terms of warmth" (214). A follow-up experiment asked subjects to hold a hot or cold compress and afterward to choose between a reward for themselves and a gift for a friend. As the researchers had hypothesized, those who had held the hot pad were far more likely to choose the "interpersonally warmer option" of the gift for a friend (Williams and Bargh 606–07). When John Searle pondered the relation between a cold object and a "cold" person, he concluded that there simply was no empirical link: "The notion of being cold just is associated with being unemotional" (97). The experiments of Williams and Bargh show that that relation may be more experientially grounded than Searle imagined.

It is fascinating, on the one hand, to find evidence that primary metaphors such as "Heavy Is Important" and "Warmth Is Kindness" have not been entirely uprooted from their experiential grounds. On the other hand,

it is alarming to think that such physical stimuli can subconsciously guide our evaluation and decision-making. I suspect that Hamlet would be depressed, and Feste excited, by these experiments. But whatever our reaction, we must recognize that the literal and physical senses of even our most common metaphors survive as a kind of echo in the phenomenology of metaphor. These experiments, along with the theories of Müller, Grady, and Bergen, should prompt cognitive scientists to think more deeply about the relations among conceptual metaphors, the embodied experiences that give rise to them, and the speakers who instantiate them. Conceptual metaphors, however deeply entrenched, retain their links with the physical world. Eccentric speakers can suddenly awaken even the most profoundly sleeping metaphors, foregrounding material domains that may have gone unnoticed over countless iterations. And if they are successful teachers, like Feste, they can influence the future iterations of those figures, altering the trajectory of their meaning.

But these findings run up against the strong antiliteralist strain of some earlier work in the cognitive sciences—the insistence that metaphors will get us into silliness if we take them too literally or that, as Johnson puts it, “literalism . . . which claims that all of our meaningful concepts can be spelled out literally, is false, misleading, and dangerous” (280). It is important, however, to be clear about what kind of literalism is being rejected. The antiliteralism of Lakoff and Johnson is directed against truth-conditional or context-free literalism—the kind one finds in the analytic philosophy of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Alfred Jules Ayer. In Shakespearean terms this form of literalism is closest to Shylock’s belief in a pure and unequivocal referentiality, the kind of impoverished literalism that sees metaphysics as nonsensical and Heidegger in particular as producing “sentences which fail to conform to the conditions under which alone a sentence can be

literally significant” (Ayer 35). Too many philosophers, Johnson writes, are “captivated by the dream of a pristine language—a language of carefully defined literal concepts free from the alleged taint of bodily processes” (222). But this is not the kind of vocabulary that perverse literalism creates. Turning the glove inside out offers a profoundly corporeal literalism—one that shows how physical process, understood generously enough, can account for much of what has been relegated to immateriality and abstraction.

In searching for a better definition of the literalism of Shakespeare’s clowns, we might turn to the phenomenologist whose work has most directly inspired recent cognitive scientists—Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty considers the relation of metaphor to the sensible and nonsensible or, in his terms, the visible and invisible. Seeing, speaking, and thinking, he writes, “have a name in all languages, but a name which in all of them also conveys significations in tufts, thickets of proper meanings and figurative meanings,” which, unlike the terms of science, do not offer “a circumscribed signification” (*Visible* 130). In claiming that Shakespeare’s clowns insist on the literal sense of dead metaphors, we should understand *sense* as Merleau-Ponty’s *sens*—not a stable referent but a vector of thought and meaning. These perverse literalists do not insist on the literal *over* the figurative but show how the more abstract senses of words and phrases can be tied back to the material world from which they were elaborated—implicating literal and figurative into an inextricable “tuft” of meaning.

If we take “literal sense” as this act of bending meaning back toward our embodied experiences, no one illustrates the power of that gesture better than Merleau-Ponty. *Literally* is literally one of his favorite words. In *Phenomenology of Perception* he insists that “we literally are what others think of us” (146), that the typist “literally incorporates the space of the keyboard into his bodily

space" (109), that the aphasic "literally remains without a voice" (166), that "our senses literally interrogate . . . things" (333), and that "sensation is, literally, a communion" (219). The word is sprinkled throughout his writing as liberally as it is in the conversations of modern teenagers, from his early work to his final essay, "Eye and Mind," where he insists that we "must take literally what vision teaches us" (187) and that when we speak of "inspiration" "the word should be taken literally" (167). Merleau-Ponty understood *literally* as a trope in its own right—a way of aiming at the material world and showing that the literal has a grip (*prise*) on it stronger than that of any dead metaphor. Nowhere does he employ that trope more powerfully than in his unfinished attempt to describe the "flesh of the world" in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Not surprisingly, he insists that this term "is no analogy or vague comparison and must be taken literally" (133). In one of his working notes, he elaborates on what he means: "A 'direction' of thought—This is not a metaphor—There is no metaphor between the visible and the invisible" (221). Like Heidegger, he objects to thinking of metaphor as bridging two distinct realms but also resists their collapse into a naive monism. Merleau-Ponty's literalism is not the mere return to an already understood literal sense but the creation of a new, dynamic *sens* in which flesh strives to embody its own significance. Or, as Donald Landes puts it, meaning for Merleau-Ponty is "always *between* and *around* the figurative and the literal" (37).

All this may seem a long way from the oft-lamented habit of adding *literally* before common figurative statements. But is it? If by *literally* the casual speaker signals an unusual investment in a dead metaphor and asks us to understand it "in the strongest admissible way," perhaps we should take this not merely as error but as an invitation to investigate what that strongest admissible way entails. Many cases will lead to silliness, but some

will point to a more generous understanding of the original grounds of the figure of speech, and we would be remiss to ban the word entirely from our vocabularies. I suspect the browser plug-in mentioned earlier would simply shut down if faced with a text by Merleau-Ponty. How could it possibly decide whether such instances were correct or incorrect? It could not, because these usages do not refer to a fixed sense but are rather a direction of thought and meaning—language in the act of bending back to the world to interrogate the conditions of embodied experience.

I might end by proposing this trope as a tool for current writers on embodiment, but, as heirs of Merleau-Ponty, many have already discovered it even if they have not theorized its usage. When Maxine Sheets-Johnston describes the kinesthetic basis of our self-knowledge, she claims, "We literally discover ourselves in movement" (136). When Shaun Gallagher discusses the role of movement in infant perception, he insists, "More precisely, and quite literally, we can see our own possibilities in the faces of others" (1). Andy Clark envisions "human cognition quite literally bleeding out into body and world" (70) and describes "new equipment" becoming "quite literally incorporated" into our minds and bodies (31). And in her new-materialist reading of quantum physics, Karen Barad insists that the cascade experiment is "more than a metaphor" and that we should read its implications as literally as possible, since "matter and meaning, the literal and the figurative, are never as separate as we like to pretend" (362).<sup>5</sup>

In all these cases, *literally* asks us to pause and listen for the materiality lurking beneath our everyday figures of speech. Like Antonio, we might be surprised to find that a phrase uttered countless times as nothing more than a dead metaphor can suddenly take hold of the world in wonderful or terrifying ways, showing us that we have all along been speaking more truly than we intended. What the literature of embodiment illustrates

is what Shakespeare's clowns discovered centuries ago—that unmaking metaphors can be just as meaningful as making them.

## NOTES

1. Gibbs has identified five distinct senses of *literality* in cognitive linguistics alone (*Poetics* 75).
2. F. Elizabeth Hart and Donald Freeman each focus on cognitive metaphor in the Lakoff and Johnson tradition; Amy Cook looks specifically at conceptual-blending theory. Raphael Lyne adopts a more character-focused approach. Naomi Rokotnitz's work discusses bodily knowledge in the actors and audience and explores questions of skepticism and trust. Mary Crane uses her readings of the plays to shed light on the workings of the author's brain, while Philip Davis is interested in the brains of readers and how they are shaped by the dynamic life force that materializes in Shakespeare's language.
3. See also Lyne's discussion of metaphor's ability to shade into a collection of synecdoches (28–67). His book, however, is more interested in the conceptual side of metaphor than in its embodiment.
4. All quotations from *Der Satz vom Grund* are taken from Reginald Lilly's translation, *The Principle of Reason*.
5. The cascade experiment refers to the work of the IBM physicist Don Eigler and his lab, which created a computer-chip circuit one trillionth of an inch in size by using a scanning tunneling microscope to initiate a "molecule cascade" akin to a series of dominoes. In her reading of this work, Barad explains that the cascade is not simply a handy metaphor for the rapid and unpredictable development of nanotechnologies but a miniature enactment of that phenomenon (353–64). The rearrangement of atoms holds "the literal potential" to "initiate a chain reaction . . . that will fan out and explode into a host of new technologies" (362).

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# Indigested in the Scenes: *Hamlet's* Dramatic Theory and Ours

DANIEL L. KEEGAN

A SIGNAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PAST HALF-CENTURY OF THEATER and performance research has been the emancipation of performance from its supposed “subordinat[ion] to the primacy of the text” (Lehmann 21).<sup>1</sup> In this process, to borrow Diana Taylor’s influential terms, the “repertoire” of “performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing” and “many other forms of repeatable behaviors” (20, 37) has been liberated from the domination of the “archive” (19), the privileged repository “of written culture defined by the fixity and stability of writing” (Worthen, *Drama* 65) where “documents” of authority and power are kept in a state of “house arrest” (Derrida, *Archive Fever* 3).<sup>2</sup> This liberation has taken various forms. Over the past half-century, performance studies and cognate discourses have drawn attention to a host of performances outside a text-based model (Taylor; Schechner; Lehmann; Harding and Rosenthal). At the same time, several critics have observed that even when performances are intended to be text-based, players can hold at bay, even explode, the supposed subordination of their repertoire (Goldman; Beckerman; Bennett; Weimann).<sup>3</sup> More recently, in a series of important studies, W. B. Worthen has insisted on the primacy of the repertoire not only in constituting all performances, both text-based and not, but also, through the repertoires of scribes, editors, printers, and others, in constituting the dramatic text—and the archive—itsself.<sup>4</sup> As Worthen shows, it is the repertoire’s “technologies of performance” that “instrumental[ize]” (*Drama* xvi) and put to “work”—that have always instrumentalized and put to work, even in times of the text’s supposed primacy—the “tool” of dramatic writing (34, 1).<sup>5</sup>

If performance has recently been emancipated from the text, a homologous impulse has for centuries, if not millennia, sought to

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liberate a “literary” dimension of dramatic writing from involvement in the practices and pleasures of performance. With a history traceable to Aristotle’s claim that tragedy “reveals its power by mere reading,” this impulse has had a special power in relation to Shakespeare.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the impulse to liberate literature from performance is, in English drama, contemporaneous with Shakespeare. A “literary” English drama, with lines able to be “extracted from the dramatic situation and the character who speaks them” (Lesser and Stallybrass 415), emerged in the course of his career through the work of readers, authors, and printers who highlighted such “extract[able]” maxims, sentences, and commonplaces. Further, the sheer length of certain plays by Shakespeare might, as Lukas Erne argues, provide a window into the playwright’s emerging literary ambitions and his care for “a future readership of his plays” (113). In the past two hundred years, the ethical thrust of this liberation of Shakespeare’s “literariness” has intensified. Charles Lamb wrote in 1811 that to try to manifest Shakespeare’s poetic richness on the stage, amid the theater’s “juvenile pleasure[s],” is to go “in quest of an unattainable substance.” More recently, Harry Berger, Jr., has written that drama—and writing in general—is “overwritten from the standpoint of performance and the playgoer’s limited perceptual capacities” (*Imaginary Audition* 29–30), an evaluation that is part of his “intrepid defense of the primacy of page over stage” (de Grazia 545). The “overwritten” Berger diagnoses demands to be extracted from the theater and subjected to “decelerated reading” (*Imaginary Audition* 45), a practice that affords paging back and forth, lingering over evidence at one’s own pace.<sup>7</sup> For all their variety, these versions of dramatic “literariness” all share the intuition that drama is “overwritten from the standpoint of performance,” whether from the standpoint of the “dramatic situation,” the “two hours’ traffic of [the] stage”

(Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, prologue, line 12), the “juvenile pleasure” of theater, or the “playgoer’s . . . perceptual capacities.”

These two narratives—performance’s emancipation from the text and literature’s emancipation from performance—have dominated conversations about the relation between writing and performance. In what follows, I would like to tell an alternative story about this relation, one that emerges in the course of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. This story does not find “literature” escaping or being extracted from the theater. Instead, it finds “literature,” as “overwritten,”<sup>8</sup> being crammed into the scene of performance. This “digest[ion],” to employ the play’s jargon (2.2.377), of “overwritten” is not a smooth thing.<sup>9</sup> Rather, it is an *indigestion*, one that afflicts all participants in the event of dramatic performance. This indigestion challenges the playgoer’s capacity to attend to the play’s “necessary question[s]” (3.2.40). It disrupts the performer’s ability to “speak the speech . . . trippingly on the tongue” (3.2.1–2) and to “give it”—dramatic performance—“smoothness” (3.2.8). It disables every theatrical participant’s ability to control and to *put to work*, in Worthen’s sense, writing as it goes on a “progress through the guts” of the theater (4.3.30). This indigestion, for all that it afflicts performance with writing, does not reinstitute the subordination of performance to the text. Instead, it highlights the fraught, uncertain interplay between writing and performance, not by insisting on the performer’s capacity to hold at bay, even explode, the supposed subordination of their repertoire (Goldman; Beckerman; Bennett; Weimann) but rather by pointing out and elaborating the indigestive “overwritten” of writing and its effects on the repertoires of the theater’s inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

By (in)digesting writing—and, more, writing’s overwritten literariness—into performance, *Hamlet* tells us a more rambunctious story about writing’s participation in

performance and enriches our understanding and experience of writing's involvement there. But the payoff of this investigation is not only theatrical and aesthetic; it is also political. In the play, the (in)digestion of overwrittenness is staged as a redesign of drama's theatrical participation, a redesign that demotes it from something like an authoritative, "archival" position. This redesign democratizes the theatrical scene by debilitating the behaviors of playgoer, player, and indeed all theatrical participants and, thus, by insisting on the many repertoires with claims on any given theatrical moment. In its democratizing thrust, then, *Hamlet's* "indigestive dramaturgy,"<sup>11</sup> as I would call it, dovetails neatly with the democratizing impulses that animated many of the emancipations and liberations of performance from writing and writing from performance, whether these sought to broaden the coalition of performances beyond a text-based minority (performance studies),<sup>12</sup> to insist on the freedom of the actor with respect to the text (Goldman; Beckerman; Weimann) and on Benjamin Bennett's claim that "all theatre is revolutionary theatre," or to rescue writing from performance and for the study where it can be perused, interpreted, and deliberated on in ways that challenge the "coercively timebound sequence of performance" (Berger, "Text" 100). In all these cases, however, it is writing in performance that represents the un- or antidemocratic scenario.<sup>13</sup> In *Hamlet*, by contrast, the (in)digestion of writing in performance democratizes the theatrical scene. As we turn to the text, we might put the matter thus: if, for Worthen, dramatic performance is in technical, economic terms the putting to work of the tools of writing—he calls these tools, as I will, "agencies" of writing (*Drama* 22–29)—*Hamlet* asks what happens if we take our metaphors for dramatic performance out of the office, out of the factory and to the party, the protest, and the debate.

### The Well-Digested Blurb

I heard thee speak me a speech once—but it was never acted, or, if it was, not above once, for the play I remember pleased not the million, 'twas caviare to the general. But it was, as I received it, and others whose judgements in such matters cried in the top of mine, an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection but called it an honest method.

(*Hamlet* 2.2.372–81)

Let us begin by examining the metaphor that organizes the play's modeling of writing's—of literature's—participation in performance: digestion. Doing so will situate our discussion in relation to some of the play's well-known reflections on theater, including on the role of the clown, on Hamlet's show-passing within, and on the connection (or disconnection) between Hamlet's enunciations of performance theory and his and his play's performance practice. In relation to these widely studied issues,<sup>14</sup> my own claim can be simply stated: we ought to pay more attention to the specificity and independence of Hamlet's first and less famous statement on dramatic theory.<sup>15</sup>

I call this earlier statement Hamlet's blurb to acknowledge its resemblance to the promotional copy on book jackets and to distinguish it from his later, more famous monologue known as his "advice to the players." For Hamlet, as for most commentators, his two statements point toward a common goal: a judiciously composed and enacted scene that "hold[s] . . . the mirror up to Nature" and that, in doing so, will be well received by the judicious and the sophisticated (3.2.21–22). These two statements, however, sport crucial differences that have gone unremarked.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the advice, which concerns the behavior of actors, the blurb concerns the ethics of dramatic composition. As a consequence, the speeches' diagnoses of failure diverge.<sup>17</sup> For

the advice, failure is sited in an overwrought repertoire that risks abandoning word, nature, and humanity (3.2.1–34). For the blurb, failure is in the script. While the advice provides vivid descriptions of an overwrought repertoire, the blurb is more circumspect in its account of writing's failures. I seek to unpack this account here.

It is also in this blurb, quoted in full above, that the digestive metaphor for dramaturgy is articulated. Hamlet describes an untitled "excellent play" as "well digested in the scenes." Such scenic digestion evidently refers to the work of "the author" in "set[ting] down" the "lines" and "phrase[s]" of the script. The author has skillfully "[d]isposed in or reduced to order" the matter of the script,<sup>18</sup> in both its form and its content. An indigested script, we can assume, would not be so disposed in or reduced to order. According to Hamlet—or, rather, according to "one" that Hamlet "remember[s]"—this indigested script would be afflicted by "sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury" and "matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection." According to Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, the editors of the most recent Arden Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet*, "sallets" is "usually glossed as 'spicy bits'" (2.2.379–80n)—"ribaldries," according to their predecessor Harold Jenkins (2.2.437n)—but may indicate nothing more than "a variety of ingredients . . . in the dialogue to make it well seasoned" (2.2.379–80n). They gloss the prohibited "matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection" as anything "in the manner of expression" that might "accuse" the author of "affectation," affectation that might include what Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost* calls "[t]hree-piled hyperboles" and "[f]igures pedantical" (qtd. in Thompson and Taylor 2.2.381n).

An indigested script, on this account, would be afflicted with a species of overwriteness, crammed with "ribaldries" and "a variety of ingredients" including hyperbolic

and pedantic figures. I want to argue that, for the blurb, such a script is also afflicted with something like one of the types of overwriteness we are interested in here: Berger's theater-defying, literary overwriteness. At first glance, these two types of overwriteness might seem to contrast: the sallet-ridden script is overwritten from the perspective of theatrical judiciousness, not "perceptual capacity." Moreover, it is implied that these "sallets" and this "matter in the phrase" would be designed to "please" "the million," not to entice Berger's "decelerated" reader. And yet, what if the sallet's "variety of ingredients" not only made "the matter savoury" and accused authorial judiciousness but also challenged the perceptual capacities of the playgoers? What if "sallets" distracted these playgoers from the "necessary question[s] . . . then to be considered" (3.2.40–41) confronting them with a variety of stimuli—"ingredients"—that forced them to negotiate, on the fly, between the relative necessity of various questions or, perhaps, to choose between the rigor of necessary questions and the savoriness of the sallets? This interpretation suggests a connection between the dramatic "sallet" and Hamlet's mighty opposite in authorship: the clown, who according to Hamlet's advice to the players diverts the audience with his inopportune laughter and, perhaps, some sallets—in the sense of "spicy bits," "ribaldries"—of his own.<sup>19</sup> Some link between indigestion and Hamlet's fantasy of theatrical clowns—who "will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too," thus distracting from the "necessary questions" (3.2.38–39, 40)—is historically plausible. Robert Weimann remarks that laughter, the clown's stock-in-trade, was understood to have a "strong visceral component" (*Author's Pen* 175),<sup>20</sup> which was part of its challenge to what Keith Thomas calls the "new cult of decorum" that Hamlet advocates even as he fails to embody it (qtd. in Weimann, *Author's Pen* 175).<sup>21</sup>

Identifying the sallet with the clown does not, however, obviously imbue it with the sort of perceptual challenges that Berger diagnoses. Instead, it seems to do the opposite. For Berger, in what we might call his “paradox of dramatic poetry,” the rich, overwritten signification of dramatic writing means that this semiotic richness must somehow fail in the theater (or that the theater must fail this richness). The clown, by contrast, is one of the early modern theater’s key figures, and if the written sallet is, indeed, to be associated with the clown, it might well possess, like the clown, a “villainous” and even “pitiful ambition” (3.2.41, 42) to distract from the “necessary question[s]” under consideration, foisting on playgoers a choice between its antics and the necessary questions. Berger’s overwrittenness hesitates at performance; the clown seeks to conquer it.

And yet, the savory sallet, even if it clowns, might demur at performance through its destined digestion. The metaphors of “caviare” and “savour[iness]” activate the gastronomical sense of “sallet,” and, if it is digested in this sense, the sallet would be conducted into the play’s paradigmatic zone of perceptual challenge: the mysterious “within” that Hamlet lays claim to when he first appears onstage and that, in his account, “passes show”—that fails, in other words, to register in outward signs (1.2.85). By plunging the clown into Hamlet’s “within,” the sallet would enact an inscrutable populism and doubly challenge playgoer perception: insofar as it is linked to the clown, it aspires to challenge playgoer perception through distracting antics; insofar as it is digested, it slips into a show-passing, interior space.

The sallet, on this account, splices together two of the play’s most famous and most opposed theatrical figures: the show-interrupting clown and the show-passing “within.” The blurb, I would argue, stages precisely this genetic recombination of clown and “within,” and it does so through its own

infiltration by overwrittenness. In the second of the blurb’s prohibitions, Hamlet recounts the outlawing of “matter in the phrase to indict the author of affection.” I have glossed this as a prohibition against “affectation” and affected language, but in this moment Hamlet indulges in—or stumbles into—a punning connection between *matter* and *mater*, the Latin for “mother.” Hamlet thus warns playwrights against not only “affectation” but also “affection” manifested through “mother in the phrase.” The *matter/mater* pun will be explicitly activated in act 3 when Hamlet declares, “[B]ut to the matter—my mother” (3.2.316), but its presence here is confirmed by the “sallet.” We have seen this term name overwrittenness, but it is itself overwritten. The first definition of the term given in *The Oxford English Dictionary* is not the possibly “spicy” “variety of ingredients” suggested above but, in reference to “mediæval armor, a light globular headpiece” (“Sallet,” def. 1.a); in the hands of Thomas Heywood, in 1599, the term was made to refer “*jocularly* . . . to . . . a measure for wine” (def. 1.b). Hamlet’s prohibition against “sallets” is haunted by a prohibition against his father’s poison- and wine-filled helmet.<sup>22</sup> Through overwrittenness, the “sallet” and “matter” coalesce into a furtive version of Hamlet’s family tree.

Like the clown, these overwritten terms challenge perception by shirking the necessary questions then to be considered: Hamlet’s attempt to put them to work in blurbing an “excellent play.” Unlike the clown, they do so quietly, not through gregarious laughter but through a Latin pun and a joke about armor. They do not stop the show; they sulk on its margins. And yet, the show-passing sulk of “matter” and “sallet” is belied by their invocation of the even more necessary questions of the play: Hamlet’s poisoned father, his affection for his mother, his filched inheritance. These sallets challenge the repertoires of the theatrical scene’s inhabitants. They challenge the playgoer, as well as Hamlet’s interlocutors,

to perceive them and to interpret their relation to the current scene. They doubly vex Hamlet's behaviors: his repertoire of criticism and speech is deflected into this tacit family tree, and even if he has punning overwrittenness in mind, his repertoire of revenge is indicted by this reminder of the questions to which he ought to be, in this moment, attending.

The obscure clowning of these sallets reverberates through the repertoires of those not present for the performance. It is not only the repertoires of Hamlet and his audiences that are vexed; those of the play's original critic are too: the praise of the performance for its lack of "sallets" and affected "matter in the phrase" is, after all, something Hamlet "remember[s] one said." These terms have had their punning overwrittenness emerge (or, certainly, intensify) since their original enunciation, which predated the death of Hamlet's father. Since his mother's remarriage, Hamlet has had more serious *mater* issues; since his encounter with the ghost, he has more reasons to worry about a wine- and poison-filled "sallet." The blurb thus engages overwrittenness with respect not only to theatrical judiciousness, playgoer perception, and player's enunciation but also to dramatic situation: like the "funeral baked meats" that, as Hamlet complains, "[d]id coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" for Claudius and Gertrude (1.2.179–80), the blurb is "furnished forth" in a scenario that no longer suits.<sup>23</sup> Its "leftover" language is extracted from its dramatic situation and digested into one where the words no longer fit the actions—the *work*—that Hamlet and the original reviewer propose to accomplish with them.<sup>24</sup>

Does this multidimensional overwrittenness enforce an escape from the theater? Are we obliged to smuggle these sallets out of the theater and furnish them forth into the study? There is, of course, no shame in doing so, especially for a modern audience with small Latin and less knowledge of medieval armory, and the account that I have presented

here is completely the product of "decelerated reading" practiced outside the flux of the theater. What, then, about an early modern audience? I think this is the wrong question. We do not need to estimate the aural bandwidth of an Elizabethan or to identify the segment of the audience that might have the educational attainment to follow these sallets or the disposable income to watch the play repeatedly and work out the jokes. Instead, we can observe that the blurb's sallets simultaneously insist on a theatrical habitation—through, especially, their affiliation with the clown and the play's most necessary questions—and intimate an escape from it. At the very moment that they distract from and disjoin the necessary, "timebound" questions of the scene, the sallets are thereby affiliated with the paradigmatically theatrical clown who, much to the dismay of both, is crammed into the show-passing guts of the prince, from where these sallets point toward the play's even more necessary questions, which, for the moment, seem to have been forgotten.

Writing, for the blurb, cannot easily be contained by the theater, but it also cannot quite escape from it. Its tangled topology emerges through the indigestion of the behaviors of the participants: neither clown nor critic, prince nor playgoer is able to well digest the duplicitous (or, rather, multiplicitous) agencies of writing. Such repertorial indigestion is, beyond the blurb, one of the dramas of *Hamlet* itself. Overwrittenness, as we shall see in the next section, deposes the claims to rhetorical (and, more broadly, aural) authority and efficacy that characterize the play's first act. By the end of the play, overwrittenness and the indigestions to which it gives rise will have progressed through the sociopolitical sphere not only of Denmark but also of the play's whole history, from its earliest sources to the players who performed it yesterday (or, as we shall see, in 1636). This indigestive progress opens a democratic space of collective response. If no one can well digest the scene,

why should everyone not get a try? Why might not the reading of the blurb presented here have come to pass not (or not just) through laborious, decelerated reading but among a group of friends at an after-party, one of whom happened to have been apprenticed to an armorer, one of whom really enjoyed Latin jokes, and the last of whom had a few extra coins to see the show more than once?

### From “Globe” to “Machine”

*Hamlet*’s indigestive dramaturgy unfolds a democratizing redesign of writing’s participation in performance. This redesign deposes an authoritarian model of rhetorical efficacy that evokes the textual “primacy” from which performance has been, in the last half-century, liberated. In *Hamlet*, however, the liberation is not complete. Instead, individual repertoires are afflicted by the agencies of writing; the affliction does not, however, subordinate the repertoire but opens up a democratic space of collective engagement. Attending to this indigestive affliction qualifies recent efforts to highlight *Hamlet*’s emancipation of performance from writing (Worthen, *Drama* 94–111; Trudell), bringing an important topic of *Hamlet* criticism—the play’s habit of “materializing the word” (Ferguson 271) and letting it “act upon the body” (Pollard 135)—in contact with its modeling of dramaturgy and the repertoire.<sup>25</sup>

This indigestive redesign is inaugurated along the tract leading from one of the play’s most famous dramatic agencies to another: from Hamlet’s “globe” to his “machine.” Along the way, it enacts the downfall of a cosmic, theatrical, and political paradigm. Hamlet’s—and *Hamlet*’s—“globe” is famously overwritten, but in a way that does not challenge playgoer perception or scenic digestion. Indeed, it seeks to promote such digestion. The “globe” is enunciated immediately after Hamlet’s interview with his father’s ghost and as part of a promise to remember: “Remember

thee?” Hamlet exclaims, “Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat / In this distracted globe” (1.5.95–97). The “globe,” however, is not content to refer simply to Hamlet’s head; it ripples concentrically outward to implicate the inhabitants of the Globe Theatre and even of the world beyond it, the “great globe itself” (Shakespeare, *Tempest* 4.1.153). This concentric effect aims to reinforce, not disable, Hamlet’s promise in two ways. First, it seeks to yoke the inhabitants of the Globe and the “great globe” into collaboration with Hamlet’s promise: if he is ever at risk of forgetting his father, he can always ask the audience to help him remember! Second, it situates Hamlet’s remembering globe in the sort of “privileged topology” that, for Jacques Derrida, characterizes the archive (3). Archivization is Hamlet’s task in the ensuing lines: he claims the “book and volume of [his] brain” as the topology where his father’s “commandment all alone shall live” “[u]nmixed with baser matter” (1.5.103, 102, 104). The “globe” and its concentric rings radically privilege this topology in turn by evoking a geocentric cosmos and the stability of its crystalline spheres. Hamlet’s “globe” would in this scenario be cast in a cosmically central, proverbially immobile position, a position “defined,” like the archive, by “fixity and stability” (Worthen, *Drama* 65).

The “globe” and its overwrittenness participate in an effort to digest Hamlet’s behaviors, subordinating his repertoire to his promise and his father’s commandment; they also seek to digest—dispose in or reduce to order—his audience’s attention. By implicating the audience members—and all humanity—in his promise, Hamlet aims to dispose and order them according to the necessary questions of remembrance and promise that, for him, are now under consideration. This overwritten effort to digest the audience aligns with a broader model of reception characteristic of the play’s first act, a model that finds sound seizing on and subordinating the repertoire of its auditors in a way that, as Allison K.

Deutermann writes, was at the turn of the seventeenth century “becoming associated with certain kinds of plays—revenge tragedies, heroic romances, and other older but still popular forms” (233). To wit: a rooster seizes the repertoire of the ghost, obliging him to “fade” “on the crowing of the cock” (1.1.156). The ghost demands from Hamlet a revenge “as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love” (1.5.29–30) and, later, requires a remembrance (91). The “poisonous audition” (Pollard 123–43) of Claudius’s “hebona in a vial” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.5.62), poured in the “porches” of Old Hamlet’s ears, seizes immediately “all [Old Hamlet’s] smooth body” (63, 73). Claudius’s political technologies, from assassination on, feature such compelling sounds, whether he is dropping poison in Old Hamlet’s ear or insisting that the “King’s rouse” be accompanied by a burst of “cannon to the clouds” (1.2.127, 126). Claudius’s politics—including his domineering appeal to the “better wisdoms” that “have freely gone / With this affair along” (1.2.15–16)—might, to Hamlet’s dismay, be a sort of model for the rhetorical and aural strategy of the “globe.”

Through its overwrittenness, the globe and its concentric spheres provide a diagram for this model of well-digested theatrical reception, mapping its vintage—“older but still popular”—theatrical sound onto a legacy cosmic system. Like Hamlet’s dramatic theory, the globe imagines a well-suited relation between “action” and “word”; unlike Hamlet’s theory, this relation is characterized less by judicious writing and acting than by authoritarian, repertoire-seizing speeches and sounds. With the advent of the “machine,” things change. Action is emancipated from its subordination to the word, and the word becomes unsuitable to the actions undertaken with it. This unsuiting of the word—*machine*—to its actions arises through the intervention of writing and, with it, of language’s capacity to be furnished forth and redigested, or indigested, in new scenarios.

Let us consider the contrasting overwrittenness of the machine. Like the globe, the machine functions in Hamlet’s repertoire of promising, engaging his body or part of it in what seems the characteristic form for his protestations of faith and constancy. Unlike the globe, the machine appears in writing. In a letter to Ophelia that invites her to “Doubt that the stars are fire / Doubt that the sun doth move / Doubt truth to be a liar” as long as she “never doubt I love” (2.2.114–17), Hamlet declares that he is “[t]hine evermore, most dear lady, whilst *this machine* is to him” (120–21; emphasis added). By the time the letter appears in the play, however, Hamlet’s “machine”—which both Thompson and Taylor (2.2.121n) and Jenkins (2.2.122–23n) gloss as Hamlet’s body—has taken leave of the qualities that would allow it to support the action of his promise. This promise was predicated on his possession of his body, but his body now seems possessed and ready to go to pieces, emitting, according to Ophelia’s report on his behavior, at least one sigh “so pit-eous and profound / As it did seem to shatter all his bulk / And end his being” (2.1.91–93). Hamlet’s sighs and “afright[ing]” (72) appearance are the reason the letter is furnished forth at this moment and put to work in Polonius’s repertoire of investigation, providing the key evidence of Hamlet’s love “lunacy” (2.2.49) to Claudius and Gertrude. Just as it exceeded Hamlet’s dramatic situation and amorous promise, Hamlet’s body-machine resists Polonius’s actions. The shattered repertoire of which Polonius is aware points playgoers beyond the encounter with Ophelia and reminds them that this body has been shivering in the “shrewdly” “bit[ing]” wind (1.4.1) and has been encountering ghosts that “shake our disposition / With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls” (55–56).

Hamlet’s body-machine balks at the actions that Hamlet and Polonius seek to perform with the letter. The “machine,” as a piece of writing, similarly unsuits itself to these

proposed actions. Once perhaps a wholesome, well-digested word, *machine* has been afflicted with leftovers and converted to an indigestible sallet by the events of the play. It possesses the following recalcitrant meanings: dating back to 1545, a “material or immaterial structure, esp. the fabric of the world or of the universe; a construction or edifice” (“Machine,” def. 1.a; emphasis added); to 1595–96, a “scheme or plot” (def. 1.b); and, to 1583, a “military engine or siege-tower” (def. 3). Except for the sense of the cosmic machine, which chimes with Hamlet’s rhyme about the sun and the stars, these senses are not well enough digested by the questions of the play to be resolved either through Hamlet’s promise to Ophelia or through Polonius’s inquiry into Hamlet’s love madness. Instead, these leftover senses are activated and gobbled up by the even more necessary questions of the play. The sense of *machine* as a cosmic structure, besides its tinny chime in the letter, recalls the dialect and stakes of the meetings with the ghost, when eyes might “start from their spheres” (1.5.17) and “heaven and earth” are crammed with “more things . . . / Than are dreamt of in . . . philosophy” (165–66). The sense of *machine* as a scheme recalls the plots that were revealed and hatched on the platform where Hamlet and the watch saw the ghost, and the sense of the term as a siege weapon (def. 3) evokes the armored ghost who so recently besieged the battlements and the watch.<sup>26</sup>

Hamlet’s “globe,” for all that it was “distracted,” optimistically envisioned consonance between the questions of the play and the attention of the audience. The “machine,” by contrast, is entirely distracting. Like the “sallet” and “matter” of the blurb, it challenges the playgoer’s perceptual capacity to negotiate between the questions to be considered and the more necessary questions it raises. It also highlights the somatic dimension of the (in)digestive metaphor by staging the digestion of its leftover agencies into Hamlet’s show-passing “within.” We can be-

gin to track this staging by noting a sense of *machine* not recorded in *The Oxford English Dictionary*: in an anonymous poem from *Tottel’s Miscellany* (1557) we hear of “[t]he machine huge Troyans suspected not” (“Of the Troubled Common Welth”; emphasis added), and in *Epitaphes, Epigrams, Songs, and Sonets* (1567), George Turberville writes of “the Machin huge . . . [b]y Grecian guile so falsely wrought” (106; emphasis added). Hamlet’s machine is linked to the paradigmatic siege machine, fashioned as a hollow, secretive animal body that could at any moment open and unleash its contents. Although the Trojan machine highlights the possibility of violence (exactly what Claudius must fear from Hamlet), Ophelia’s report suggests that Hamlet’s machine is just as likely to unleash bulk-shattering sighs. This potentiality is confirmed in the 1592 translation of Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (*The Strife of Love in a Dream*), whose narrator, having descended into a hollow, man-shaped colossus, cries for love so that “the whole Colosse and Machine of brasse did resound, striking me into a horrible feare” (14; emphasis added). He feared, perhaps, the shattering of his bulk and the ending of his being.

We can track the infiltration of overwriteness into this machinic “within” in some detail. The digestive process begins at the moment of the “globe,” which cannot sustain the cosmic stability that it evokes. Even beyond the “distraction” that Hamlet diagnoses, the problems multiply. The “globe,” like the “machine,” is furnished forth into a new scenario that no longer suits: its privileged, geocentric topology refers to an “outmoded” belief (Thompson and Taylor 2.2.114–17n). This moment also introduces the unpredictable leftoverness of writing, not only in the “book and volume of [Hamlet’s] brain” but also in the scribbled commonplaces he commits—or wants to commit—to his “tables,” or notebook (1.5.107). The stately, concentric overwriteness of the “globe”—linked to speech

and hearing—is, perhaps as a consequence, infiltrated and disrupted by the clowning overwrittenness that seems linked to writing. For example, Hamlet probably should not have figured himself as the paradigmatically immobile “globe” only moments after he was so forcefully interpellated as a revenging “son,” punningly invoking the “sun” that, in a geocentric cosmos, will doubtlessly move. It was also probably impolitic to give “memory”—another means of furnishing language forth—a “seat” in the Globe, a gesture that risks riling the groundlings, who, though allegedly capable of understanding “nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise” (3.2.11–12), later seem to take up arms as part of Laertes’s revolutionary “rabble” and, on his behalf, nearly convert their inexplicable “noise” (4.5.109SD) and “cr[ies]” (109) into the overthrow of “[a]ntiquity” and “custom” (103). And the staging does not help: at the moment that Hamlet enunciates the “globe,” it seems unlikely that he is performing the stability of the globe: he is ranting, calling (maybe looking?) for his tables (demanding them from the audience?), or perhaps trying to write in them. He is reeling about the stage, emitting what Horatio will call “wild and whirling words” (1.5.132), looking for all the world like a celestial object about to come unstuck from its long-standing pride of place.

Hamlet’s reeling body-machine enacts the demise of a cosmic system and, in the same moment, of the systems of political command and theatrical reception for which that cosmic system was a model. This collapsing system will find itself indigested in Hamlet’s “within,” his body-machine. We have already seen the “machine” enact a reconfigured overwrittenness. It also tracks this reconfiguration of overwrittenness from “global” extroversion to “machinic” introversion. One of its constituents—the cosmic machine—points us to the “globe,” affiliating its overwrittenness with this calamity of planets and of theatrical reception. Things intensify as another of

these leftover agencies enters the scene both to reinforce planetary dislocation and to inflict itself on Hamlet’s repertoire. Old Hamlet and his armor machine, transformed into a “pionier[ing]” “old mole” (1.5.162, 161), lead Hamlet and his companions on a merry chase across the stage. After his interview with the ghost and once again attempting to secure a promise, Hamlet persuades his companions to swear themselves to secrecy about the night’s events. Once they have sworn, Hamlet furnishes forth the demand that they swear again, this time by his sword (146, 148, 153–54). When they demur—“We have sworn my lord already” (147)—the commandment of the ghost issues up through the floor: “Swear” (149, 155, 160). After the second such “Swear” (155), Hamlet decides that they must “shift [their] ground” (156). He and his companions wheel across the stage as a little, scurrying planetary system in which there is no doubt that the “son”—he of the recently stable “globe”—doth move. Rather than assume the privileged topology of the “book and volume” of Hamlet’s brain, moreover, the collapsing cosmos and the burrowing old mole inflict their energies on the “baser matter” of Hamlet’s body, if only by forcing him to run across the stage. By the time Hamlet is able to say “[r]est, rest, perturbed spirit” (1.5.180), he is surely in need of a rest himself—all the more reason for leisurely colloquies with Reynaldo and Voltemand.

Through this staging, the leftover agencies of the machine indicate the material processes that inflict themselves on Hamlet’s body, indigesting not only his rhetorical repertoire but also his physical behaviors. The machine dynamically stages this infliction as its leftover definitions leap out to associate with these processes, which then inflict themselves on the flesh, crashing back “within.” Hamlet’s flesh inherits the debased energies of these collapsing systems (cosmic, theatrical, political), as well as the clowning connotations of the machine. The cataclysm of

this infliction of matter and of salleted words (and, for that matter, of his father's sallet-helmet) is pointed up by the equine valence of the siege machine. If the paradigm of this machine was the Grecian "machine huge," then the equine charge might transfer to the armor-siege machine of the father to cast the chase of the "old mole" as a furnishing forth of the story of Phaeton, the son of the sun who tangled with his father's horses—or, here, his father as horse.

What interaction between writing and the repertoire is modeled here? We have seen playgoer perception emancipated from the rhetorical claims of Hamlet's "globe" (and, earlier, Claudius's "affair") but then indigested by the multiplicity of overwritten agency. We have seen player behavior "given unsmoothness," instead of the "smoothness" that Hamlet recommends (3.2.8), by the materiality with which this overwrittenness affiliates itself. Might we be watching the author disabling his competitors in authorship—players, playgoers—and subordinating their repertoires, even in their indigestive unsmoothness? I do not think so. Here, the "*domiciliation*" (Derrida 2) of overwrittenness in Hamlet's "within" is more anarchic than archival or authorial, more "house party" than "house arrest"; the author's control seems minimal even as the agencies of his writing indigest the repertoire. We might risk thinking about this relation through the old story that Shakespeare himself played the ghost to Richard Burbage's Hamlet:<sup>27</sup> then the planetary gambol across the stage allegorizes not only Hamlet's unmanageable inheritance but also the agency of the author in dramatic performance. Shakespeare here hardly determines Burbage's performance. Perhaps he determines Burbage's direction, but this is uncertain. We cannot be sure whether Hamlet moves toward or away from the sound. One imagines Burbage interacting virtuosically (or ineptly; no need for hero worship!) with the inciting energy of Shakespeare's "Swear!" The

author, trapped under the stage, would have no way of knowing or directing what Burbage was doing, and the actor might not know where the burrowing author was going next.

But what of the Trojan dimension of this interaction? If Hamlet is, indeed, crammed with writing, should this writing not, according to antiquity's leftover story, at some point burst forth to endanger Denmark, the player, and the playgoer? Should this ingested writing not, according to the story, conquer and enslave the onlookers? That is how the story goes, but not how things play out. Instead of vomiting up a commandment to seize on the repertoire, the Trojan machine functions as the first generation in an equine dynasty tracing a developing relation between indigested writing and the repertoire. After Burbage-Hamlet's encounter with the Trojan-Phaeton machine, Hamlet, before the performance of *The Mousetrap* begins, laments the "hobby-horse" who "is forgot" (3.2.128). Finally, as Claudius is scheming with Laertes, they both reminisce about a Norman horseman named Lamord (4.7.80–100). If the Trojan machine packs dangerous potentiality, these other figures present different images and qualities of horsemanship: Phaeton presents it as a cosmic catastrophe; the "hobby-horse," consisting of the "figure of a horse fastened round the waist of a man" (qtd. in Jenkins 500) "worn by a morris dancer" (Thompson and Taylor 3.2.127n), manifests folksy amateurism; Lamord presents an incomparable, indescribable virtuosity.

Instead of imagining the violent reflux of indigested dramatic agency, this equine inheritance appears to map a gradual accommodation of the repertoire to indigestion from the Phaeton calamity to the virtuosic Lamord. And yet, we cannot be certain of this accommodation. We are never granted complete, perceptual access to it, a point highlighted by the fact that each figure of horsemanship is somehow secret. The Phaeton-father is hidden under the stage, is

only retrospectively named by the machine, and is the “wondrous strange” thing undreamt of by Horatio’s “philosophy” (1.5.163, 166). The Trojan machine is a paradigm of secrecy, and our one encounter with it in the play is missed: when we join the action of Pyrrhus’s revenge, already in progress, he has exited “th’ominous horse” (2.2.392). The “hobby-horse” is “forgot” and, as Jenkins writes, was the “type of what is forgotten” (3.2.132–33n); and Lamord “[s]o far . . . topped [Claudius’s] thought” that the King “in forgery of shapes and tricks / Came short of what he did” (4.7.87, 88–89).<sup>28</sup>

This thought-topping secrecy evokes claims that, in the “coercively timebound sequence of performance” (Berger), we might “come short” (Claudius) of the “unattainable” (Lamb) relation between word and action, between (literary) overwrittenness and the necessary questions of a moment or of a play. We cannot be certain whether we are like the skillful Lamord or the calamitous Phaeton, the doomed Trojans pulling in the ominous horse (2.2.392) or the comical hobbyhorse, in our efforts to bring overwrittenness in relation to performance. We might think that our “prophetic soul[s]” are virtuosically seizing significance “as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love” (1.5.40, 29–30), but we might just be performing a mockery morris dance of comprehension and interpretation amid the sheer bandwidth of dramatic performance. From this, however, we need not deduce the superiority of the “decelerated” reader. Instead, we ought to admit that although we may not be able to catch every overwritten agency before it achieves escape velocity past our emancipated ears—we may not even try! we might make a hash of it!—we will have the opportunity to seize on the “literariness” of the play before it gallops into the study. We will also have the chance to talk about these efforts (with our friends! at a party!). The uncertain, potentially infinite process of trying to calibrate a suitable rela-

tion between word and action produces, in the play’s final scene and in its aftermath, the staging of a dramatic democracy, as writing indigests all the repertoires on—and, indeed, off—the scene.

### “Anti[c]ke” Roman(s)

Claudius, through his appeal to “better wisdoms,” and Hamlet, through the “globe,” both aspire to well digest the behaviors of their political and theatrical audiences. By the time of the machine and the blurb, the fantasy of rhetorical authority that sustained their aspirations has been undone—indigested—by the duplicity of overwrittenness. The democratic possibility opened by this indigestion is staged, for example, in the critical response to the outmoded aurality of the supposedly “excellent play”—“This is too long,” Polonius complains (2.2.436), and Hamlet, perhaps impatiently, urges the Player to “come to Hecuba” (439). The conclusion of this democratizing indigestion comes on the “anti[c]ke” tongue of Horatio.<sup>29</sup>

Horatio is supposed to give the play its final digestion, rescuing Hamlet’s “wounded name” (5.2.328) and pacifying “men’s minds” lest the opening moments of Fortinbras’s regime be afflicted with “mischance” (378) arising from “plots and errors” (79). He should do so with the confidence of the “globe” and by translating the play into a founding epic-narration. His capacity to so translate theater is called into question as overwrittenness indigests his tongue. Horatio seeks to refuse his task of foundation by drinking the last dregs of the poisoned cup, declaring, “I am more an antique Roman than a Dane” (325). This attempt to plug into the theater’s tragic machinery and to avoid “report[ing] [Hamlet] and [his] cause aright / To the unsatisfied” (5.2.323–24) is undercut by the affiliation of “antique” Romanness with narration and foundation. Although Horatio means to invoke the Romanness of heroic suicide, his

repertoire of self-slaughter is disabled by the connection between antique Romanness and epic-narration, a connection *Hamlet* manifests in the most antique Roman of them all: Aeneas, whose epic “talk to Dido” (2.2.384) is the speech that Hamlet—unlike, as we have seen, Polonius—“chiefly loved” (383) in the “excellent play.” Horatio stumblingly invokes what he means to avoid.

If Horatio’s repertoire of suicide is diverted into one of regime foundation by the duplicity of “antique” Romanness, his repertoires of suicide and of foundation are mocked in turn. Aeneas must share lingual real estate with another theatrical figure: the clown. In all modern editions, Horatio claims to be an “antique Roman,” splitting himself between tragic suicide and epic foundation. In the earliest texts—and until the fifth quarto, printed in 1637—he was an “anti[c]ke Roman.”<sup>30</sup> Horatio might be preparing to kill himself or to tell an epic tale, but he also might be preparing to play the fool (and, quite possibly, to play the fool in killing himself or telling his tale). This generic splicing recalls and reenacts the indecorous recombination of populist clown and elitist “within” staged in the blurb. It also activates the logic of inheritance and “furnishing forth” we observed above, and not only because Horatio is to crown Fortinbras. In the play, both Aeneas and the clown are marked as passé figures ripe for reform. Neither Polonius nor Hamlet, as mentioned above, would mind a shorter version of Aeneas’s speech; the clown, of course, is a major topic of Hamlet’s reforming advice. By indigestively speaking more than is set down for him, Horatio furnishes forth these two traditions, reanimating them and, finding himself at their confluence, inscrutably projecting them forward into his narration and the new regime. We may be disturbed that Horatio is experiencing this indecision at the moment he is supposed to found a regime. On the other hand, we might find pleasure in this hesitation and its “mingling [of] kings and clowns”

(Sidney). Casting himself as an “anti[c]ke Roman” situates Horatio as the inheritor of both king (who delighted the judicious) and clown (who delighted the groundlings); it also makes him the joiner of a pair of “anti[c]ke” Romans who stood as indexes of theatrical quality: for the Players, it was said that “Seneca cannot be too heavy nor Plautus too light” (2.2.336–37). We might also delight at detecting in Horatio’s ensuing performance a “variety of ingredients” commensurate with his tongue’s inscrutable, “thought-topping” mingling of the antique and the antic Roman (or, then again, we might argue that Horatio pulls it together and does well by his classical namesake;<sup>31</sup> there is no need to subordinate his repertoire alone!).

Horatio’s “anti[c]ke” enunciation situates him as the inheritor of the best the theater has had to offer and, in doing so, casts him as a new model of theatrical pleasure, one in which we cannot be certain which parent’s traits are dominant and in which this uncertainty is the point. Horatio also convenes a kind of long dramaturgical parliament running not only from Plautus to Will Kempe but also from the author to the scribe to the actor to the playgoer to the editor to the printer to the reader, in which none of the participants has the repertorial competence to say exactly what work, in that moment, was supposed to be going on. Neither the most virtuosic actor’s voice nor the most acute audience member’s ear can precisely identify the genre of Horatio’s intentions. But the blame falls too on author’s pen, printer’s press, and reader’s eye. No one in the many stomachs of dramatic production has managed to well digest this “anti[c]ke” sallet, nor could they. Instead, it goes a progress through the guts of the study, the theater, and the printing house, disabling repertoires on its way and, in the same gesture, bringing them all into play.<sup>32</sup> This indigestive progress is anticipated in the blurb, where the task of “set[ting] down” a “well digested scene” seems like the author’s,

but this task is figured as cookery—seasoning and not overseasoning lines—for the actor who will “mouth” it (3.2.2), even though it is the spectator who receives “a taste of . . . quality” (2.2.369). Horatio’s anti[c]ke, indigested tongue radicalizes this dramaturgical democracy, inviting everyone to a feast they cannot hope to finish.

We live in a disciplinary moment characterized by, as Joseph Roach writes, a “widening gap between performance studies and literary studies” (1080) and, in Shakespeare studies, what Weimann calls an “alienation between textual and performance approaches” (“Performance” 4).<sup>33</sup> This gap and alienation have been notably conditioned by the twin gestures of emancipation—of performance from text, of literature from performance—that I identified above. *Hamlet*, by contrast, stages the indigestion of “literary” overwrittenness into the scene of performance, an indigestion that, at least until 1637, culminates on Horatio’s “anti[c]ke” tongue. In *Hamlet*, this indigestive progress redesigns drama’s participation in performance, from the authoritarian rhetorical fantasies of the first act to the collective pleasures of the last. Its dramaturgy refuses the coercions that allegedly arise at the intersection of writing and performance and, instead, highlights and even celebrates the parties, protests, and debates that flourish there.

## NOTES

This piece has developed over many years and has taken many forms. Special thanks to Ian Munro, Bryan Reynolds, Julia Reinhard Lupton, Donovan Sherman, Casey Caldwell, Sally Lindfors, David Keegan, Ellen MacKay, and PMLA’s anonymous reader.

1. This logocentric drama and its discontents have been discussed in relation to Greek philosophy (Weber 1–53; Bennett 13–26), the media ecology of the “Gutenberg galaxy” and its aftermaths (Lehmann 16; Weimann and Bruster; Worthen, *Drama* 1–138), colonial projects (Taylor 16–43), and the emergence of national literatures (Bennett).

2. Although the dominant critical move has been liberation of repertoire from archive, Taylor emphasizes that they are “in a constant state of interaction” (21). For critical appraisals of this interaction, see Taylor; Schneider 87–110; and Worthen, *Drama* 64–69.

3. Goldman observes the player’s “‘terrific’ energy” (7), Beckerman the actor’s “self-generative . . . spontaneity” (7). Bennett claims for performers a “semiotic explosive[ness]” in the face of textual subordination (180). Weimann and his collaborators have studied the highly flexible interplay between “actor’s voice” and “author’s pen” on the English Renaissance stage.

4. Schneider frames “the archive as another kind of performance” (108).

5. Worthen’s *Drama* and *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* treat these questions most directly.

6. Worthen discusses and critiques the recent resurgence of claims that Shakespeare is a “literary dramatist” (Erne’s phrase) in *Shakespeare Performance Studies* 30–79.

7. For an assertion of the ethics of the page, see Berger, “Bodies and Texts” 99–128. Berger’s modeling of performance as a form of reading has been criticized by performance-oriented critics (e.g., Garner 48–49; Worthen, *Authority* 175–78; and Ridout 72–77).

8. This is not to define *literature* as “overwrittenness” but to observe that drama’s “literary” dimension has habitually been so defined in relation to performance, especially for Shakespeare. For an alternative perspective on “Shakespeare as literary dramatist,” see van Es 56–75.

9. Citations from *Hamlet* are from Thompson and Taylor’s Arden Shakespeare edition of the play.

10. Important gestures have been made in this direction. Worthen regularly notes the “conceptual . . . leverage” that the repertoire gains from “the friction of writing” (*Drama* 83; see also Weimann, “Performance” 25; Worthen, *Shakespeare Performance Studies* 19–20). Schneider’s “chiasmic tangle of bodies with language and language with bodies” suspends an organizing principle (67); Phelan’s “oversounds” disrupt protocols of interpretation. *Hamlet’s* indigestive dramaturgy, I would argue, affords a thoroughgoing investigation of these suggestions and the not only frictive but also disabling potentialities of writing in the repertoire.

11. I use *dramaturgy* to indicate the whole process of dramatic performance from composition through performance and reception.

12. Although Sack emphasizes the radical potentialities unleashed by unscripted performance, I would highlight similar potentialities arising through overwrittenness.

13. Jarcho highlights the utopian, if not democratic, dimension of writing on the modern stage. I plan to engage Sack’s and Jarcho’s arguments in a future essay entitled “Theater with a Tiger: Potentiality and Performance in Drama and in Theory.”

14. On this voluminous criticism, see Worthen, *Drama* 94–111, and Weimann, “Mimesis.”

15. This statement’s lack of renown is attested by the fact that Hamlet’s celebration of the “excellent play,” in contrast to his “advice to the players” (3.2.1–43), has not until now had a name.

16. Weimann, the most dedicated commentator on this question, assimilates these two statements (“Mimesis” 282).

17. On “failure” in theater and performance, see Ridout; Bailes; and O’Gorman and Werry. *Hamlet* emphasizes the role of dramatic agency in such failure.

18. *The Oxford English Dictionary* dates this sense of *digested* to 1598 (“Digested,” def. 1).

19. This connection between clown and writing arguably provides a more accurate picture of the clown’s theatrical role than does Hamlet’s advice. The clown was less the antiauthor that Hamlet and many critics depict him as than, as Preiss shows, an additional and often allied pole of authority in the “authorial competition[s]” of the playhouse with its “elemental clash of performer and spectator” (7, 15).

20. Clowns were generally “aligned with the lower bodily stratum,” as they are in Marston’s *Histrionastix; or, The Player Whipped*, in which “the ‘common’ actors” engaged in clowning are given “names such as ‘Gutt,’ ‘Belch,’ and ‘Gulch,’” (Hillman 46).

21. On the fraught relation between Hamlet’s prescriptions and his performances, see Weimann, “Mimesis” and *Author’s Pen* 18–28, 151–79.

22. Old Hamlet’s sallet-helmet is filled with poison when Claudius pours the vial in his ear (1.5.61–64). It is, quite possibly, filled with wine in the course of Denmark’s customary “heavy-headed revel” (1.4.17)—the regular drinking binges in which its elites, according to Hamlet, indulge.

23. On the play’s queasy relation to food, especially meat, see Borlik.

24. The furnishing forth of the blurb recalls what Greenblatt has termed “the problem of the leftover” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 141)—the early modern anxiety provoked by the “recalcitrant, ineradicable” “material remainder” of the sign (144, 141), especially in Reformation Eucharistic theology. The disruptive vigor of these archival leftovers contrasts with Worthen’s analysis of “doing things with (old) words,” which privileges the agency of the repertoire in the digestion of “old words” (*Drama* 112–23).

25. On this materialized language, see also Sale. Ferguson emphasizes the materialization of overwritten text; both Sale and Pollard link materialization to digestion, in the context more of reception than of repertoire.

26. Although resonant with this discussion, the theatrical sense of *machine*—“A (usually movable) contrivance

for the production of stage-effects”—is not attested until 1609 (def. 4.a).

27. Rowe claimed to have heard nothing else about Shakespeare’s acting career “than that the top of his Performance was the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*.”

28. The well-digested, calculable horses of *The Mouse-trap* have drawn “Phoebus’ cart” “[f]ull thirty times” around a geocentric sky (3.2.148) and hark back to the extroverted orderliness of the “globe” and its attendant cosmic and theatrical models.

29. Horatio has recently been claimed as a democratic hero by a range of critics (Deutermann; Lupton; Warley; Wong). In a dramaturgical sense, it is his incapacity, as much as his capacity, that makes him one.

30. The second quarto prints the word as “anticke,” while the folio and the first quarto have “Antike.” *Anticke*, *antike*, and *antique* could all be used to mean either “antic” or “antique.”

31. As Jost points out, Horatio might evoke the Roman poet Horace. Although Jost emphasizes the resonances between Horace’s and Shakespeare’s interests in “posthumous literary survival,” we might also point out that Horatio tickles Horace’s famous insistence on decorum by “mingling kings and clowns.”

32. This “progress” is an extended indigestion emblemized by the sallet-helmet, which, after all, not only would be difficult to digest but also could lead to all sorts of gastric problems if filled with wine, poison, or both.

33. On these and other disciplinary alienations, including the alienation of theater and performance studies from the digital humanities, see also Worthen, *Shakespeare Performance Studies*.

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# Winthrop's Journal in Manuscript and Print: The Temporalities of Early-Nineteenth- Century Transmedial Reproduction

PATRICIA JANE ROYLANCE

**T**HE PUSH TO DIGITIZE PRINT ARTIFACTS IN ARCHIVES IS CURRENTLY strong. Digitization can widen access to rare materials and assist with preservation by lessening wear and tear on the originals. But at its core, digitization involves significant guesswork about the future: what materials, and what aspects of those materials, will be of greatest interest to future students of history? What media platforms will prove most advantageous for storing historical material, and what kind of access to and temporal experiences of the past will they provide for their users? For digitization efforts to be successful in the long run, they must acknowledge and wrestle with this guesswork, while juggling often competing but also intersecting temporal orientations toward the past, the present, and the future. One way to grapple with the problems of digitization is to examine previous eras for analogous efforts to translate historical content from one medium to another in the service of preservation and dissemination.

Print itself has traditionally been the receiving medium in efforts to preserve and disseminate the content of manuscripts. One rich example of this dynamic is the journal of John Winthrop, a leader and frequent governor in the early years of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Winthrop originally wrote the journal in three manuscript notebooks during the period 1630–49. In the early nineteenth century, an eventful epoch in the journal's history, an antiquarian named James Savage—fueled by many of the same imperatives and making many of the same compromises that characterize digitization today—prepared a print edition of the manuscript's content. A pivotally important document for studying colonial history and the national narratives that sprang therefrom, Winthrop's journal illuminates our digitizing moment especially clearly both because its material form permanently bears the marks of efforts to preserve and disseminate

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its precious content and because antiquarians like Savage prefigure our aspirations and challenges in the stewardship of the past's material culture. Navigating multiple temporalities, antiquarians steeped themselves in the past, worked to build historical literacy in the present, and attempted to predict and serve the interests of future antiquarians, often by producing print editions that reflected their creators' hybrid temporal positioning. However, investigation into the cultural meanings attached to the original manuscript and the print edition of Winthrop's journal can help underscore that whatever its advantages, a transmedial reproduction never duplicates the original; rather, each media artifact has a distinct cultural and temporal significance and a complicated relation to the other.<sup>1</sup>

The manuscript medium had a special place in the social protocols of early-nineteenth-century antiquarian cultures.<sup>2</sup> People such as Savage, a member of the Massachusetts Historical Society (the premier antiquarian organization in the United States at that time), attached particular meanings to and engaged in specific ways with the materiality of manuscript artifacts. Manuscript handwriting elicited emotional veneration as a relic of a revered past and prompted the formation of select communities—often limited to privileged white men—who cultivated expertise in deciphering barely legible script and who worked to preserve historically significant manuscripts in spaces restricted for the protection of the artifacts. But these experts saw historical value in some aspects of manuscripts more than in others: blank pages, unlike pages with handwriting, could be written on by a knowledgeable antiquarian without damage to a manuscript's historical character, as occurred with Winthrop's notebooks.

Such judgments about value affected the translation of manuscript content into print editions. A print edition and the manuscript on which it is based theoretically share a text, but editors make many choices about accept-

able levels of divergence from the original; such divergences multiply when an editor views an item being reproduced not just as an immaterial text but also as a material object, one needing to be translated into a different material form. Transmedial reproduction always involves decisions about essential elements of an artifact that must be reflected in the new medium and about inessential elements that can be distorted or unreproduced. Therefore, antiquarians' temporal ideologies concerning the most historically valuable aspects of manuscripts shaped the print editions produced, redounded back into decisions about manuscript preservation, and affected the ways in which history has been passed down to us. Savage's edition of Winthrop's journal shows this process dramatically, because Savage's particular philosophies about preservation and publication inadvertently resulted in the destruction of Winthrop's second notebook, which we now can access only through Savage's reproduction of it in the print edition of the journal, fashioned according to Savage's historical values.

Savage's edition drew much of its character from its relation to and remediation of the original manuscript; Savage worked to evoke the materiality of the past for his readers through devices such as the inclusion of a facsimile of Winthrop's handwriting, a temporally hybrid nineteenth-century document working to embody a seventeenth-century manuscript. However faithfully Savage's edition sought to reproduce the manuscript, though, the edition possessed cultural meanings distinct from those of the original. If, in Marshall McLuhan's famous formulation, "the medium is the message," the printed book had its individual message to share (7). Such messages come most clearly to light in the "denaturalization of assumptions" that results from comparing the particular affordances of different media—particularly when they seek to represent (ostensibly) the same text—and analyzing how an object like a print facsimile

of handwriting operates at the interstice of print's and manuscript's affordances, illuminating them both (Hayles and Pressman viii).

Despite its implicit promise of reproductive fidelity, Savage's print facsimile distorted the manuscript Savage aimed to reproduce, doing various forms of damage to it and changing its cultural signification. His edition was also embedded in patterns of social circulation and communication different from those of the original manuscript. In fact, the whole purpose of the transmedial reproduction was to enable a wider dissemination of the manuscript's content, beyond the restricted space of the archive, but to accomplish this goal, Savage had to alter and move away from the very thing that he wanted to reproduce. Studying Savage's situation lends us perspective as we navigate the same bind: valuing material relics of the past that we wish to preserve and disseminate more widely while wrestling with the knowledge that we cannot ever reproduce the originals exactly and that our resulting decisions have consequences for the shape in which the past is handed down to the future.

My argument about the temporalities of transmedial reproduction draws generally on the robust scholarship concerning experiences and representations of time in the nineteenth-century United States.<sup>3</sup> With their fantasies about the future audiences for whom they undertook their labors, antiquarians (perhaps surprisingly) inhabited a "timescape" (Adam 11) akin to the queer temporalities that Peter Coviello associates with writings about sexuality in the nineteenth-century United States, writings fueled by imaginings of "uncreated futures, futures that would not come to be" (20).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, antiquarians helped to bring the past materially into the present, through their commitment to preserving historical artifacts and through their affective responses to those artifacts. Dana Luciano theorizes that in the grieving body, "an affectively vitalized past could find a place

in the present," and antiquarians' bodies became similarly conductive when they engaged with and responded affectively to handwritten manuscripts containing traces of their long-dead authors (32).<sup>5</sup> Antiquarians thus stood at the intersection of multiple temporalities.

The interpenetration of past, present, and future arose naturally from antiquarian media ecologies, in which media with differing temporal affordances coexisted. By analyzing this phenomenon, I seek to add greater dimension to the temporal frameworks generally used to describe media, frameworks that often focus on moments of change when new media emerge, established media are unsettled, and old media become residual or obsolete.<sup>6</sup> Such media evolutions do not constitute all the ways in which temporality moves in and through the social experience of media, however.<sup>7</sup> Manuscript and print were dominant media in the early nineteenth century, but an old manuscript and a newly printed book functioned differently as vessels of time; one offered a tangible link back to the past while the other, attenuated in its material ties to the past, could nonetheless disseminate historical content to a broader community, fostering more widespread historical consciousness in the young republic. A newly printed facsimile of old manuscript handwriting, then, worked to harness the temporal affordances of both media forms. In transmediating Winthrop's manuscript, though, Savage's print edition not only reshaped its content in accordance with the demands of a new medium but also permanently changed its material form, cultural meaning, and temporal coding. The example of nineteenth-century antiquarians like Savage can therefore be instructive as we attempt our own transmedial reproductions and try to keep the past accessible to the present and the future.

### The Temporalities of Antiquarian Editing

The temporalities of Winthrop's journal arise not only from its varying media forms and

their temporal affordances but also from the journal's text itself. The journal's dated entries span two decades and chronicle the "infancye" of a colony that Winthrop believed to be both a temporal (i.e., earthly) and spiritual (i.e., heavenly, and therefore eternal) enterprise.<sup>8</sup> The entries vary in frequency, and Winthrop often composed them retrospectively, writing the final entries shortly before his death in 1649.

Negotiating these multiple temporalities, Savage, with his edition, then contributes layers of antiquarian temporality to Winthrop's content. Nineteenth-century antiquarianism arose out of a complex and multifaceted timescape, one steeped in the past but oriented toward making the past accessible to the modern world and future generations. As the Massachusetts Historical Society recording secretary described it in 1821, the society's intellectual culture brought together "old books and new men" (*Proceedings* 281). Savage—animated by significant degrees of ancestor worship and committed to producing erudite footnotes explaining historical context—was preoccupied with the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, his edition's text does not embody a solely, or even predominantly, backward-looking approach.

In perhaps the most fundamental alteration, he brought Winthrop's prose into the nineteenth century. As all editors to some extent must, he deviated from what appeared on the page; he chose to modernize archaic spellings and abbreviations that would alienate the nineteenth-century reader.<sup>9</sup> Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, editors of the authoritative scholarly edition of the journal, discuss various possible modernization strategies. They explain why they decided against a literal transcription but chose a less aggressive style of textual modernization than Savage employed (Editorial Method xli–xliv). However, because the second notebook was destroyed in an 1825 fire while Savage prepared his edition, Dunn and Yeandle had

to use Savage's more radically modernized transcript for that section of the journal.<sup>10</sup> Their edition presents the reader with a sharp contrast in levels of textual modernization, first and third notebook versus second, and renders the long-dead Savage a "ghostly third partner" in the editorial work, as Dunn and Yeandle put it (Acknowledgments ix). Savage's historical ideologies and approach as an editor thus permanently affected the temporal character of Winthrop's writing as we experience it in hybridized form now.

Appropriately, then, Savage located the primary audience for his scholarship in the future. After correcting some errors in his second edition of Winthrop's journal, he wrote, "I am content, that its little or great faculty should be judged in scales of impartiality fifty years hence"; in the context of another scholarly project, he wrote, "I care nothing about money, having enough and to spare; but I am very solicitous for my reputation fifty or a hundred years hence" (Letter [29 July 1853] and Letter [16 Jan. 1847]). His projection of times "hence" impinged on his scholarly work, as it did with most antiquarians from this period who undertook to preserve the past for the benefit of posterity, with the assumption that the United States would continue to grow greater and that future generations would value accurate knowledge of the nation's past. As one donor observed of the coins that he gave to the Massachusetts Historical Society, they "may become interesting to the antiquary of future times, if I may be allowed so strange a phrase" (Letter). In the early-nineteenth-century antiquarian imagination of the future, people would be looking backward.

In digitization projects today, we engage in similar acts of imagination, picturing future students of history whom we hope will benefit from our stewardship of their past. These visions, however, remain guesses at what will interest people of the future about the past. Such guesses are necessarily shaped

by the values that we project onto the future. Especially when considering historical artifacts not just as abstract texts but also as material objects undergoing transmedial reproduction that will alter the texture of the past to which they provide access, we must be aware that our assessments of aspects essential and inessential to their historical value—and the effect of those assessments on our reproductive strategies—might not align perfectly or even well with future antiquaries' values.

### Winthrop's Manuscript

In its manuscript form, Winthrop's journal derived a significant portion of its temporal character from the particular cultural meanings that nineteenth-century antiquarians attached to manuscript as a medium. These meanings can be gleaned by studying the discourses and protocols of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the first historical society in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Founded in 1791, it treated rare manuscripts as fragile vessels of the nation's history: their handwritten status provided an especially precious, tangible link to the past, and their immense value required protection in a regulated environment of antiquarians dedicated to the work of preservation. Sequestering these relics for their protection had the effect of limiting access to upper-class men, and while such exclusivity enhanced the aura attached to manuscripts, it trapped the information contained therein and conflicted with the society's goal of disseminating historical knowledge to the nation. The prerogatives of preservation and publication thus had to be juggled.

A word repeatedly used by antiquarians to designate artifacts such as Winthrop's journal and to indicate their temporal signification was "ancient." The third manuscript notebook had been lost for decades before its rediscovery in 1816; the society's *Collections* for that year described the find as an "ancient manuscript," written "in an ancient hand"

(200). Not merely old, the manuscript constitutes a vestige of the distant past. The word "hand" conflates handwriting with the hand that produced it, so this ancient manuscript also reembodies a long-dead person. It renders American antiquity materially present in improbable and wondrous fashion.

Ancient manuscripts such as Winthrop's journal represented an important part of the new nation's heritage, and the society had therefore always prioritized their preservation. The society's constitution began: "The preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and records, containing historical facts . . . conduces to mark the genius, delineate the manners, and trace the progress of society in the United States, and must always have a useful tendency to rescue the true history of this country from the ravages of time and the effects of ignorance and neglect" (*Proceedings* 2). In the early republic period, when nationalist impulses were encouraging the creation of a protonational narrative about the emergence of the United States during the colonial era, antiquarians recognized the need to gather and preserve relevant materials for creating this narrative and connecting the nation to its past.

Once identified by the society as historically significant, artifacts like Winthrop's third notebook were stored in the society's reading room, a regulated space whose restrictive protocols and limitations on access communicated the great value understood to inhere in the collections. Members of the public rarely got to use the society's collections. Although the society had announced in the early 1790s that "[a]ny person desirous of making a search among the books or manuscripts" of the library "may have access to it" by applying to one of the society members, "any person" in reality likely meant any man of a relatively high class status—the only kind of person who would entertain the presumption of making such a petition (*Proceedings* xxii).<sup>12</sup>

Women generally had no access to the society's room. The women who might have come closest to Winthrop's notebooks in situ during this period were cleaners, such as the woman who was paid \$1.00 in August 1821 "for cleaning the library room" and who signed her name on the receipt as "hannh readdig" (Receipt). Some female antiquarians may well have had interest in consulting the library's holdings but likely would not have applied to use them. Savage wrote the Connecticut historian Frances Manwaring Caulkins that he had discussed one of her queries with another antiquarian but "did *not* allow him to know my correspondent's sex, that his judgment might not be distorted" (Letter [14 Apr. 1846]).<sup>13</sup> In this kind of an intellectual culture, a female antiquarian would have accessed society collections only when copies of materials were published (indicating the social importance of transmedial reproduction) or perhaps when a society member with whom she had a close relationship borrowed books and brought them into domestic spaces open to women.<sup>14</sup>

Although the society restricted access to the reading room, thereby signaling the perceived value of the collections, its members enjoyed some license in interacting with historical materials, especially when preparing publications. According to the society bylaws from this period, the regulations governing borrowing were not to "prevent the Committee chosen to superintend the publications of the Society, from taking out of the library, with the knowledge of the Librarian, as many books and papers as they may want" (*Proceedings* 210). Savage's edition of Winthrop's journal, though not an official society publication, was undertaken under the society's aegis, and Savage probably enjoyed this greater borrowing license—which had the inadvertent effect of causing the second notebook's destruction in the 1825 fire that consumed his office. The society prioritized publication and dissemination of its holdings (at least when conducted

by the trusted few) over hoarding materials and ensuring their inviolate preservation.

Nonetheless, manuscripts seem to have been more tightly guarded than print artifacts. The bylaws stated that the society librarian had to be present when a member removed a manuscript from the library, whereas, with books, the bylaws required that the librarian have "knowledge" of the borrowing (210). This extra stricture placed on manuscripts recognized their greater rarity and the special historical value attached to their handwritten status.

For early-nineteenth-century antiquarians, handwriting forged a tangible link to people of the past. Rendered in archaic scripts with fading ink, ancient handwriting often seemed initially illegible. Savage described Winthrop's handwriting as "cramp and abbreviated hieroglyphics" (Letter [19 Jan. 1864]). But with significant effort, and often some eyestrain, dedicated, skillful antiquarians could overcome the material challenges posed by ancient handwriting. In fact, the initial barrier to understanding served as a rite of initiation: once an antiquarian developed competence in reading the script of a given manuscript or writer, the antiquarian could feel a sense of ownership over the artifact and pride in the exclusivity of the group capable of unlocking its secrets. After all, Jean-François Champollion had cracked the code of Egyptian hieroglyphics by the time Savage used that descriptor for Winthrop's writing, so the hieroglyphics metaphor suggests preliminary indecipherability but eventual decryption by a virtuosic decipherer.

Antiquarians often experienced significant affective responses to ancient handwriting.<sup>15</sup> On a research trip to England in 1842, Savage wanted to unearth information relating to John Harvard. Although largely frustrated in this effort, he did find Harvard's signature in the Cambridge University registrar's records: "My success was great at the University book. . . . The satisfaction of

finding him signing his name strongly in 1631 and 1635 for obtaining two degrees is almost compensation for coming across the ocean" (Trip diary entry). The material character of Harvard's handwriting contributed to Savage's emotional reaction. Savage specifies that Harvard signed his name "strongly," perhaps referring to the width of the lines (indicating the force with which Harvard applied pen to paper) or the flourish of the elongated loop of the final *d*.<sup>16</sup> "Strongly" certainly works to solidify the sense of connection that Savage feels with Harvard, a seventeenth-century man who left few material traces of his life. Given what Tamara Plakins Thornton characterizes as "the consistent identification of handwriting with the self that produces it," the vitality of Harvard's strongly rendered signature, produced by his own hand, brings the man to life suddenly and powerfully, right before Savage's nineteenth-century eyes (xii).

That Savage felt this kind of affective response to Winthrop's manuscript and other textual relics became most clear when the material connection to the past that they embodied for him was severed by the fire that destroyed his library in the early morning of 10 November 1825. In the aftermath, Savage wrote a letter to a frequent correspondent in which he expressed "lamentations" over the "absolutely and forever irretrievable" loss of his "treasures." "The 2<sup>d</sup>. Vol. of W's autograph is burnt," he mourned (Draft letter). "Autograph," a term indicating a manuscript written in an author's handwriting, emphasizes that the notebook had been created by Winthrop's hand and was therefore precious and irreplaceable.

Although antiquarians thus venerated ancient handwriting, they did not regard every aspect of a manuscript's material form as equally hallowed by association with the past. The past clung unevenly to the manuscript object, and its paper seemed less precious than its script. In some cases, the exigencies of preservation prompted antiquarians to

tamper with a manuscript's form: loose manuscripts and pamphlets were often secured together in sturdy bindings, which sometimes necessitated removing other, more ephemeral types of covers and generally required that works be sewn into the binding.<sup>17</sup> This kind of action did not register as impinging significantly on the historical character of a manuscript object. The need for library classification of collections also justified alterations to manuscripts, including writing on them. The society bylaws specified that "[a]ll manuscripts shall be distinctly marked and numbered" (*Proceedings* 211). The call-number markings on the inside cover of the first notebook of Winthrop's journal may in fact have been added by Savage himself, during his tenure as the society's librarian from 1814 to 1818.<sup>18</sup>

Armed with a similar sense of authority to make changes that would serve antiquarian goals, Robert C. Winthrop—president of the Massachusetts Historical Society from 1855 to 1885 and a descendant of John Winthrop's—pasted several pieces of paper onto pages near the end of the journal's third notebook and noted, in ink, why he had done so. Above a scrap seemingly taken from a letter and reading "Your loving son John Winthrop," Robert Winthrop wrote on 3 April 1857, "Finding this autograph of the Gov. of Connecticut (John Winthrop Jr.) loose in this volume, & in danger of being lost, I have pasted it upon this blank page" (Winthrop, Manuscript journal, unpaginated back matter; fig. 1).<sup>19</sup> The desire to preserve the "autograph" on the scrap suggests again the value attached to the handwriting of historical personages, especially their signatures, as indexical signs of their selfhood. In contrast, Robert Winthrop's emphasis on having glued the scrap onto a "blank page" indicates that, despite his being conscious of some impropriety in altering such a valuable manuscript, blank pages did not have the same value as pages that contained writing. The antiquity of the paper and

its presence in the manuscript did not confer enough historical sanctity to dissuade antiquarians from altering it to protect a vulnerable and more valuable piece of history.<sup>20</sup>

This selective valuation of an object's various material elements has instructive parallels to how we now typically reckon the historical character of an object. Although changing regimes of value have now come to view paper as sacrosanct, a fixation on the period of initial creation tends to ignore elements of a later date, especially ones produced by librarians and archivists in the course of their work, as if such labor and its material traces were transparent. For example, in their modern edition, Dunn and Yeandle provide minutely detailed

physical descriptions of the still-extant notebooks, including bindings and blank pages. However, they do not mention the signature of John Winthrop, Jr., or Robert Winthrop's note, and gesture toward their reasoning when they state that they have reproduced the content of endnotes "in JW's hand" (Winthrop, *Journal* 772 [editors' note]). The historical character of the notebooks has been fixed as a reflection of John Winthrop, Sr., disregarding other layers of their history. Aspects of the notebooks' material form that can be definitively attributed to later hands do not qualify as integral to the journal in its proper historical character and may not be routinely targeted for preservation and reproduction.

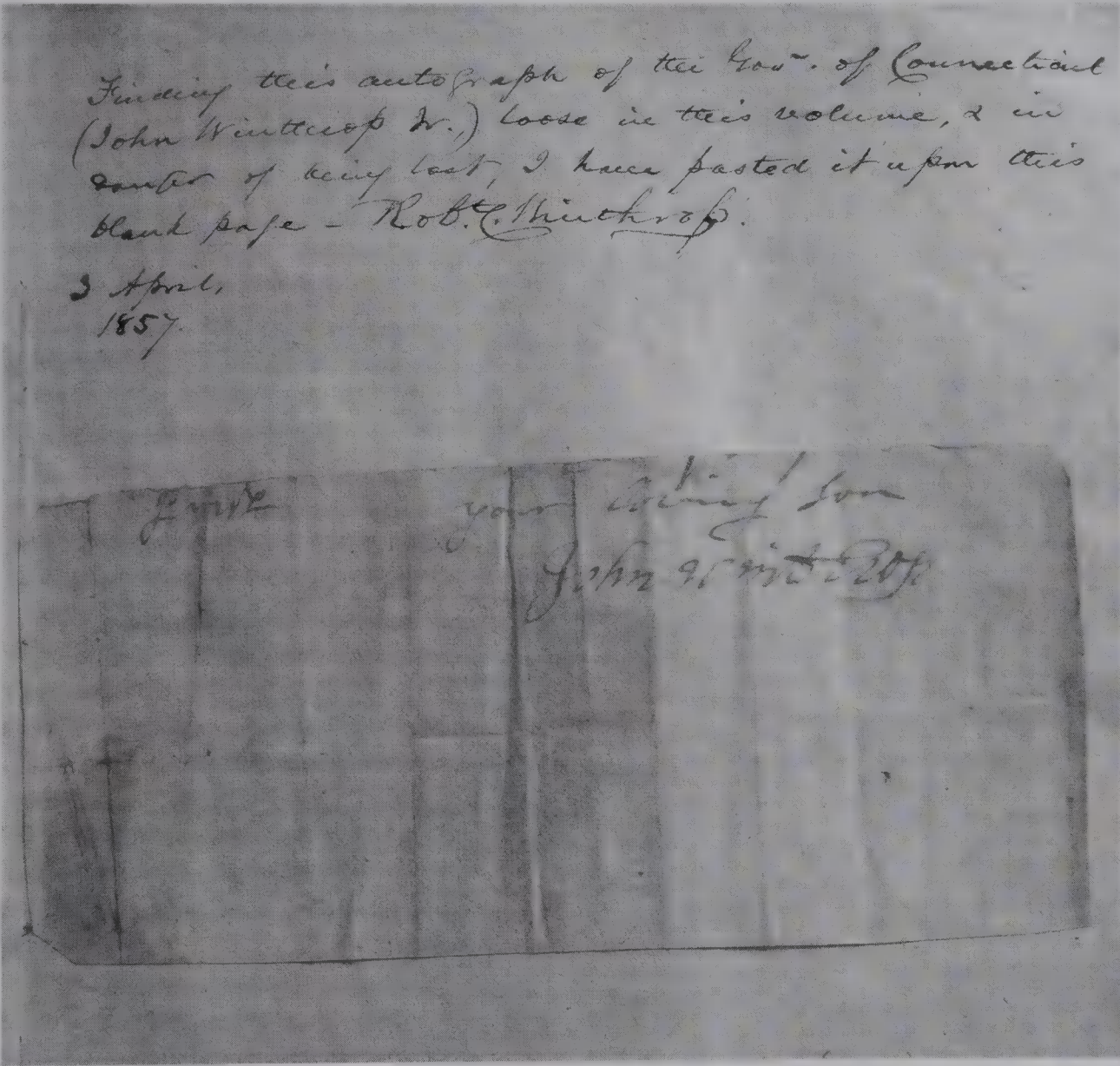


FIG. 1  
Note from Robert C. Winthrop above the pasted-in signature of John Winthrop, Jr., in the third notebook of the manuscript journal of John Winthrop, Sr. Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

In the nineteenth century and today, such selective valuation has affected what will be available to study in the future, making it all the more important to understand the temporal ideologies that scholars and librarians apply to historical objects such as manuscripts (even as the neglect of those ideologies' material traces imperils such understanding). In the early-nineteenth-century culture of the Massachusetts Historical Society, ancient manuscripts like Winthrop's notebooks were seen as national treasures, relics whose handwriting provided tangible, affectively charged access to the past and whose correspondingly great value inspired efforts to regulate use and access, including by the criteria of class and gender. Rarity and exclusivity enhanced the aura attached to manuscripts, while also encouraging the development of an insider ethos in which expert antiquarians judged which aspects of a manuscript held the greatest value and therefore what compromises could be made to preservation in the interest of expanding access through print publication.

### Savage's Edition

Savage's edition of Winthrop's journal, *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, partook of a society imperative to publish rare, significant material and make the material's historical knowledge more widely accessible than it could be in the archive. In his edition, Savage tried to evoke the materiality of Winthrop's precious manuscript notebooks, especially by including a facsimile of Winthrop's handwriting, a hybrid media object that seemed to offer the most desirable temporal affordances of manuscript and print: the suggestion of a tangible link to the past combined with a reproducibility allowing for broader dissemination of historical content. Nonetheless, the process of transmedial reproduction necessarily entailed a step away from the manuscript medium. Embedded in structures of production, consump-

tion, and meaning particular to print culture, Savage's edition ultimately attenuated material ties to the past, distorting and to some extent damaging the original manuscript. The edition thereby prioritized publication over preservation to give the past a more robust future in a different material form.

Although Savage's edition transcribes the text of Winthrop's notebooks and thus derives a significant portion of its meaning from its relation to manuscript, the edition is still a print artifact. Savage positions it in a print tradition by emphasizing the previous editions of the journal, especially Noah Webster's 1790 version. He takes the extraordinary step of reproducing Webster's title page, dedication, and preface at the end of his own preface. The print materiality of Webster's edition is strongly evoked through the reproduced title page, which retains much of the original formatting as well as the imprint:

Hartford :  
Printed by Elisha Babcock.  
M,DCC,XC. (1: ix)

Savage thereby stresses a print lineage of antiquarian editions into which his work fits.

Steeped in antiquarian print culture, he did not just consume printed works but also involved himself deeply with the processes of print production. References to "presswork," proof sheets, and the demands of overseeing printing operations litter Savage's personal correspondence (Autobiographical sketch). He personally supervised the printing of his works. At one point during the production of the second edition of Winthrop's journal, when Savage was at his summer residence in Lunenburg, Massachusetts, he returned to town to stop the presses to correct an error (Letter [28 June 1853]). The timing of print work and the annual rhythms of upper-class Boston Brahmin life did not always synchronize well, but Savage made the effort to occupy both worlds.<sup>21</sup> When he was preparing the first

FIG. 2

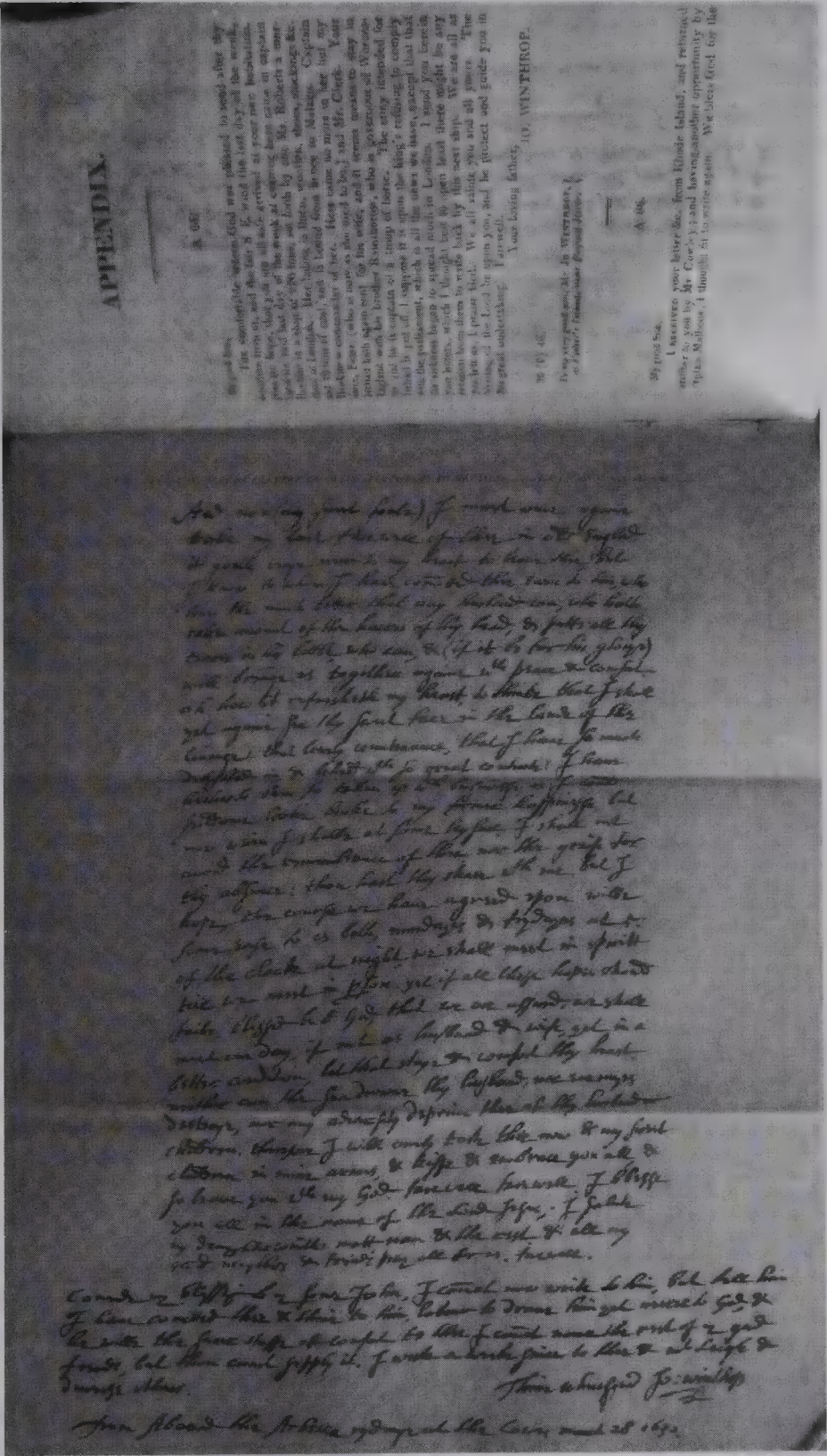
Foldout facsimile of John Winthrop's handwriting from a letter written on 28 March 1630, included in James Savage's print edition of John Winthrop's journal (Savage, *History 2*: opposite 351). Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

volume of the first edition, hands-on supervision would have been much easier, because his printers, Phelps and Farnham, occupied the “adjoining room” to his law office, where he did his writing (*Proceedings* 393). (This proximity also heightened the devastation of the fire, because it destroyed the Winthrop material in both areas.)

Thus thoroughly engaged with the paces and material processes of antiquarian print culture, and intimately aware of his edition of Winthrop’s journal as a print artifact, Savage nonetheless worked to evoke the materiality of Winthrop’s manuscript notebooks in the edition. Savage’s most striking strategy in this vein was the inclusion of a facsimile of Winthrop’s handwriting in the second volume (fig. 2).<sup>22</sup> Created by the Boston engraving company Annin and Smith, the “fac simile” reproduces an excerpt from a letter written by Winthrop to his wife on 28 March 1630, while he waited on board the *Arbella* at the Isle of Wight before crossing the ocean (*History* 2: opposite 351). The facsimile employs the technologies of print to provide readers with an experience of manuscript; with this gesture of “remediation,” the “tactics, styles and content” of the older medium are “rehearsed, displayed,” and “mimicked” by the newer medium (Thorburn and Jenkins 10).<sup>23</sup> The handwriting specimen in Savage’s edition mingles the seventeenth with the nineteenth century, old handwriting with fresh print, and holds these different times and media experiences in tension through its material form.

Savage’s facsimile conjures the look and feel of Winthrop’s handwriting. According to one of Sav-

age’s contemporaries, facsimile technologies “preserve for posterity the animated traces of great men” (qtd. in Pernoud 352). Winthrop’s handwriting, as reproduced by the facsimile, provides a living link to the long-dead man whose hand traced those lines. Moreover, the





disassociated from the writer” (xiii). Savage calls particular attention to this contrast. At the top of the facsimile, he provides a detailed citation—“Volume 1. P. 368.9. Appendix A.41” (*History 2*: opposite 351)—indicating where the reader can find the typeset transcription of the facsimiled letter (fig. 3). The citation’s detail facilitates the reader’s ability to compare the two versions of the letter and experience their different material forms and attendant temporal affordances: one the embodied, revived past of Winthrop’s handwriting and the other the modernized disembodiment of type, meanings that the media take on most strongly when juxtaposed (further indicating the importance of comparative frameworks for understanding the cultural signification of media forms). A temporal hybrid, Savage’s edition enables an experience of multiple media temporalities.

But, of course, although the facsimile relies on the contrast between handwriting and print for its significance, it is not actually handwriting but rather print, an inked impression made on paper by an engraved plate in a printing press. The print facsimile aims to obscure its medium by seeming to promise unmediated access to the manuscript original and therefore to the revived manuscript writer. Emmanuel Pernoud notes a shift in this period away from the term *engraving* and toward the term *facsimile*: “reproductions were no longer designated by the craft that went into them but by their ability to stand for something else, to simulate. Engraving was henceforth expected to be totally transparent” (352).<sup>24</sup> But facsimiles have a troubled relation with the originals that they aim to transparently reproduce. Instead of giving direct access to the medium they mimic, facsimiles insert themselves as an additional layer of mediation, drawing on but seriously complicating the tangible connection to the past thought to be provided by a manuscript original.

Facsimiles inevitably introduce distortions into the reproductions of their origi-

nals.<sup>25</sup> These distortions are often silent and unmarked, and in some cases even unrecognized by the facsimile creators. Comparison of the facsimile in Savage’s edition with the original letter shows the various changes that the engraver made to produce his transmedial reproduction, including the reorientation of the final section of the letter from vertical (Winthrop took advantage of the blank space on the page’s margins instead of adding an additional sheet) to horizontal, resulting in the otherwise inexplicable widening of the final lines of the letter in the facsimile (fig. 4). This change calls attention to the differences between an actual letter and a foldout inserted into a printed book (or, with transmedial reproductions today, the differences between pages in a book and images on a screen): they present different constraints and opportunities to their producers and prompt different modes of reader handling, consumption, and interpretation. For example, Winthrop’s economy with paper embodies material thrift, an allocation of resources toward the pursuit of eternal ambitions; in contrast, Savage’s expensive and expansive foldout indicates the lavishness of his ancestor worship. As a luxury good, the foldout embeds Winthrop in earthly

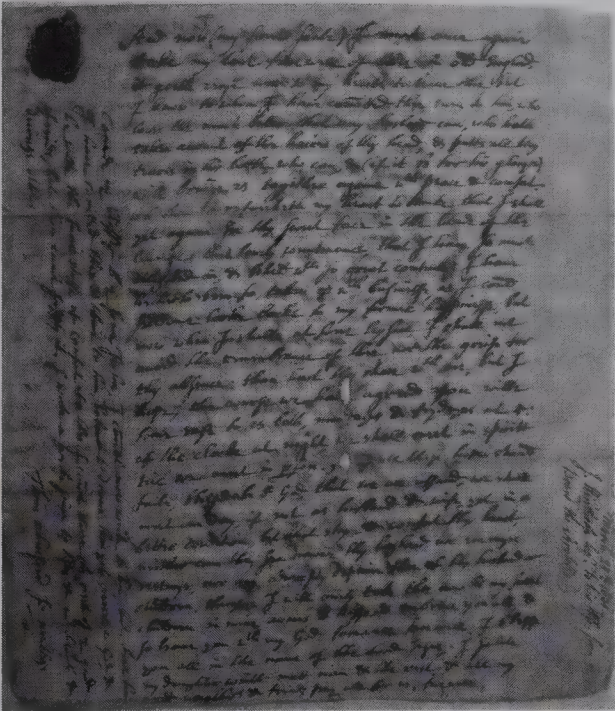


Fig. 4  
Manuscript original of John Winthrop’s 28 March 1630 letter (Winthrop, Letter). Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

life at the point of his starkest renunciation of such worldly things, illustrating how an altered material form can radically change the temporal signification of content. Savage's facsimile thus remakes the seventeenth-century Winthrop in the nineteenth century's image.

Beyond such transmedial distortions, facsimiles in their very nature as reproductions occupy a fundamentally ambiguous territory. Reproductions of handwriting trade on the idea that a writer's autograph is unique and an index of that writer's individuality, but as Hunter points out, facsimile technologies undermine the equation of handwriting with individuality because "[a]t each stage" of print production "human agents necessarily intervened to produce the printed document" (85). The Winthrop handwriting facsimile sells itself as a relic of the seventeenth century—Winthrop's material trace—but it has emanated much more directly from the hand of the nineteenth-century Annin and Smith engraver than from Winthrop's. Instead of providing a tangible link to Winthrop and the colonial past with which he is associated, the facsimile offers an experience of print that mimics while occluding access to manuscript materiality. Thus, in the words of Meg Roland, "Facsimiles bring us, at once, closer and farther removed from a textual or creative [or historical] moment—a silvery, evanescent moment that eludes our touch, just as, simultaneously, it seems to be within reach" (57).

Facsimiles don't just fail to provide access to the original; they also alter the original as a function of their production, further compromising the reader's ability to connect to the manuscript and the past that it conjures. According to Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe, aura results from the creation of facsimiles, instead of existing as an inherent quality of a work. Contra Walter Benjamin's famous argument, Latour and Lowe maintain that replication of many copies does not diminish but rather produces auratic originality: "No copies, no original. To stamp a piece with the

mark of originality requires the huge pressure that only a great number of reproductions can provide. . . . [A] work of art grows in originality in proportion to the quality and abundance of its copies" (278–79). In the Winthrop facsimile, Savage doesn't reproduce and make available Winthrop's handwriting as such; he produces it in a new guise, as the authentic relic of yesteryear and the "original" toward which the facsimile points, a meaning that the handwriting would not have had for the seventeenth-century Winthrop and would not have had (to such an extent) sitting unreproduced on the shelves of the Massachusetts Historical Society reading room. The facsimile therefore not only presents the past to the reader in altered form but also offers an essentially different past from the one embodied by the manuscript in its own right.

While facsimiles manufacture aura and might therefore be seen as adding value to the original work, this effect often comes at a cost. The technological process of producing facsimiles in many cases does damage to the original. This damage may be judged a reasonable trade-off for the wider access to the content of the original provided by facsimiles, but it does alter the original, in some sense no longer accessible at all in its old form. To create the Winthrop facsimile, the paper of the original letter was damped so that a trace of the ink could be lifted, and the moisture caused the ink to feather, or blur. The sense of this damage as a loss comes in part from the aura attached to the original, itself a product of the facsimile; if Savage had not caused a facsimile of the letter to be made, the letter would not be as widely known or as cherished. The facsimile thus plays a vital role in creating the pathos surrounding the damage that it did to the original. But the facsimile unquestionably altered the original in the process of reproducing it, further complicating its implied promise of providing unmediated or transparent access to the original manuscript and, by extension, to the colonial past of which it acts as a relic.

Nonetheless, Savage, and the early-nineteenth-century culture of the Massachusetts Historical Society more generally, accepted the distortions and damage enacted on originals—and the pasts to which they provided a material link—by the production of facsimiles, given the broader access to history thereby secured and the measure of indemnification thereby provided against future accidents that might befall original material. From its inception, the society had maintained that, because archives could be mismanaged or damaged by accidents, “[t]he surest way of preserving historical records and material is, not to lock them up; but to *multiply the copies*. The art of printing affords a mode of preservation, more effectual than Corinthian brass, or Egyptian marble” (“Circular Letter”). Viewing multiplication through print as the best form of preservation encouraged a degree of latitude in the material preservation of manuscript artifacts, at least when in conflict with the demands of publication.

This statement presents print artifacts as “copies” of, or sufficient stand-ins for, manuscript artifacts, but the impulses that drive facsimile obviously to some extent contradict this evaluation. If the material form did not matter at all, then the facsimile would not be worth the trouble and expense of producing it. As Savage’s horror at the destruction of the second notebook indicates, the original continues to be important. In his preface, Savage invites readers to consult the original in the Massachusetts Historical Society archives to check the precision of his transcription ([*History* 1: vi], though of course this invitation was effectively limited to a small cadre of socially privileged men), and he later expresses the hope that “future scrupulous antiquaries will the more diligently, on account of the loss of the second, recur to the first and third volumes of Winthrop’s autograph” (2: 201n1). The notebooks remain precious relics that Savage presumes will be valued by the future

antiquarians whose interests he seeks to predict and serve.

However, given the archive’s access restrictions and vulnerability to accident, publication had to trump preservation. Printed books necessarily attenuated and often in the production process compromised the material link to the past provided by handwritten manuscripts, as evidenced by the fate of the second notebook, whose destruction had resulted directly from Savage’s work in preparing a print edition. The pursuit of publication had triggered precisely the kind of accident that the Massachusetts Historical Society feared. Nonetheless, multiplying the copies through print (though with gestures like the facsimile to provide some sense of the original’s materiality and temporal aura) seemed to Savage and other members of the society to be the most robust method of making the past manifest in the present and transmitting it into the future.

Working at the intersection of multiple temporal prerogatives, antiquarians such as Savage chose to weaken material ties to the past, perhaps paradoxically, to safeguard their national heritage. In allocating their energies between archival preservation and publication, antiquarians balanced the temporal affordances of manuscript and print. The manuscript medium’s handwritten status forged a tangible link to ancestors, and its rare or single copies enhanced their perceived preciousness while also rendering the content more vulnerable and the relics less accessible; engaging a manuscript artifact in antiquarian cultures involved accessing restricted spaces and acquiring specialized skills and understanding. In contrast, the print medium rendered historical knowledge less vulnerable to loss and widened the community able to engage with the past, though its more materially distant relation to history also dissipated some of the aura attached to manuscript relics and lessened the intimacy of connecting to the past through them.

In some cases, antiquarians damaged the manuscript artifact to produce the print edition. They were willing to dampen a manuscript and feather its ink to produce a facsimile of it or risk losing artifacts to fire or other accidents because removing them from the more regulated reading-room environment facilitated the process of preparing publications. Although they attempted to limit such damage, antiquarians deemed dissemination a goal important enough to make some compromises with preservation. And even when print publication did not involve physical damage to the artifact, transmedial reproductions, whether typeset or facsimile, inevitably introduced distortions because the process necessitated assessments of the relative value of various features of the artifact: decisions about which features could be sacrificed to the demands of the reproductive medium because those features were considered not essential to the core value or nature of the artifact. Whether conscious or unconscious, these assessments of the artifact's essential and incidental features influenced not only the nature of the resulting print publication but also the treatment of the artifact. As indicated by antiquarians' willingness to write on blank pages of a manuscript, historical aura clung differentially to various aspects of the artifact's form.

More generally, the movement of content from one medium to another inevitably involves the shedding of some meanings and the acquisition of others. A deep understanding of the cultural and temporal meanings attached to the flow of historical content from manuscript to print in the early nineteenth century can therefore help us to assess current imperatives surrounding the digitization of print and other archival material. Ideologies and problems similar to those seen in the case of Winthrop's journal now characterize the transmediation of physical artifacts into digital images.

Like nineteenth-century antiquarians with their affective attachment to manuscript

handwriting, scholars today revere the material book as a tangible link to the past. Elaine Treharne, for example, describes book objects using the language of incarnation, as "Word Made Flesh," "corporeal," "a still-living witness to the past" through which a reader "touches, skin-upon-skin, in direct tactile intimacy," the book's creators and previous users (473, 466, 475, 474). Affect, rooted in the reader's body, is elicited by the fleshed book and the history that it embodies.

However, this experience clearly relies on access to such book objects, generally housed in archives, which—though less exclusive than the nineteenth-century Massachusetts Historical Society reading room—are still typically rarified and geographically restrictive spaces. Hence the push toward digitization, an admirable democratizing impulse that renders historical material more widely accessible to a more diverse population and often adds functionalities like text searching and other manipulations made possible by optical character recognition.<sup>26</sup> And akin to Savage's facsimile, digital facsimiles can add aura to their originals, especially—according to Latour and Lowe—with high-quality copies. Image capture can sometimes be so fine that it augments what the naked eye can see, as in the Archimedes Palimpsest (Kirschenbaum and Werner 420).

Conversely, though, these digital affordances come at the cost of the book object's unique affordances. Optical character recognition and zoom capabilities privilege written text and visibility, in contrast to the haptic kinesthetics integral to engaging with the fleshed book in its material wholeness.<sup>27</sup> A digital facsimile's "transparency effect," to use Manuel Portela's phrase (107), aims—like Savage's facsimile—to elide the differences between original and copy, but Portela notes that "[t]actile qualities have been translated into visual properties" and "[t]hreedimensionality is flattened into the two dimensions of the screen plane" (109). Not

coincidentally, some typical forms of damage to archival material by digitization result from the effort to render three-dimensional objects flat for optimal image capture, such as brittle paper and fragile spines breaking under the flattening pressure of glass plates.<sup>28</sup> And although some conservation-minded libraries condemn cutting a book's spine to facilitate digitization, others still advocate the practice.<sup>29</sup> Digitization practices arise from and materially enshrine our necessarily historically contingent regimes of cultural value. Blank pages are now usually deemed essential to a book artifact, but facsimiles rarely if ever reproduce—and may damage—the edges of books, despite the significant informational and aesthetic content often found there.<sup>30</sup>

In digitization, temporal meanings also shift. Treharne identifies an “integral oldness” to medieval manuscripts (474), whereas Bonnie Mak highlights the “intersecting temporalities” of digital facsimiles: “Referring to their exemplars at the same time that they refer to themselves, transmitting both past and present,” digitizations offer an “imbrication of old and new” (1516). Just as the differing temporal affordances of manuscript and print transformed the meaning of Winthrop's journal in the process of its transmedial reproduction and found particularly layered temporal expression in Savage's facsimile, so too do the differing temporal affordances of the physical and digital transform content in digitization. The past offered by a digital medium diverges substantially from the past offered by book artifacts, and given the damage that digitization can do to those artifacts, digital mediations of the past can irretrievably alter the histories to which book artifacts connect us.

Libraries and archives may accept such a trade-off, especially to increase access to collections. But the desires of users today must always be weighed against the unpredictable interests of users in the future. A digital image is not equivalent to or a substitute for a physical book. This fact might lead us to be

especially conservative in the compromises to preservation that we allow in advancing the work of digital dissemination. It might furthermore affect our approach to collection and encourage resistance to the trend of siphoning library funds away from print acquisitions toward digital leases. It should certainly render us more self-aware, when we produce or study a digital facsimile, of the differences between that facsimile and the original that it simultaneously mimics and occludes—and occasionally damages.

But we should not conceive of digital images as inferior simulacra of print originals, a conception that pits the print and the digital against each other in a hierarchy of value. The example of Winthrop's manuscript and Savage's edition illustrates that a digital image and a print artifact are both media objects with their own temporalities, materialities, and associated cultural protocols. The flow of content from one media platform to another, from life as one kind of media object to life as another, always entails a cultural resignification. Attention to the varying meanings and experiences generated when historical content moves from print to digital media can help us steward the material culture of the past effectively, for the benefit of the “antiquary of future times.”

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## NOTES

1. My understanding of transmediation has been shaped by the discourse on transmedia storytelling spawned by Jenkins. See also Kittler (265–73) and Kress (124–30), although they use the terms “transposition of media” and “transduction . . . across modes,” respectively (Kittler 265; Kress 124).

2. Gitelman defines media as “socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation” (7).

3. On temporalities in the nineteenth-century United States, see Allen; Bartky; Bruegel; Coviello; Dimock;

Johns; McCrossen, *Holy Day and Marking*; Moskowitz; O'Malley; Pratt; Smith; Stephens; and Weinstein.

4. Or perhaps not so surprisingly, given Goode's analysis of antiquarianism's nonnormative masculinities.

5. On the body's ways of storing the past, see also D. Taylor.

6. Studies of media change that incorporate predigital examples include Acland; Gitelman; Gitelman and Pingree; and Thorburn and Jenkins.

7. For a parallel effort, though focused on mediated time in late modernity, see Keightley.

8. Winthrop refers several times to New England's "infancy" (167, 307), "infancye" (76), or status as "Enfant Plantations" (675).

9. On textual modernization and transmediation as central to scholarly editing, see G. Taylor. On nineteenth-century historical editing, see Cappon.

10. Dunn and Yeandle used the text from Savage's 1853 second edition of the journal.

11. On the history of the society and early-nineteenth-century historical societies in general, see Callcott 35–45; Dunlap; and Tucker.

12. Even for such an applicant, like the historian George Bancroft, who applied to use the collections in 1833 to assist in the preparation of his *History of the United States*, unwieldy conditions were often placed on access (*Proceedings* 476; Bancroft).

13. The letter to Caulkins is sewed to a letter dated 28 June 1845.

14. On gendered exclusions at the society and how one particularly well-connected female antiquarian circumvented some of them, see Henle.

15. On the way that affect can attach to particular media forms and therefore be reconstellated in the transmediation of content from one form to another, see Brouwer and Licona.

16. For a reproduction of these signatures, see Morison, opposite 106.

17. For a history of this practice, see Knight, who observes that "library and collecting routines go beyond simple preservation: . . . they selectively impose the value systems and bibliographical expectations of the culture in which the collector is situated," thereby affecting later generations' sense of the past (64).

18. A comparison of Savage's handwriting with the call-number listing in the journal shows a marked resemblance in the formation of the numerals, especially the number four.

19. The author of the journal proper is John Winthrop, Sr., generally referred to in the critical literature as John Winthrop. The pasted-in signature is that of his son, John Winthrop, Jr.

20. In a similar example, Savage wrote the following in ink on a blank page of a Thomas Lechford manuscript in the society collections: "This manuscript is, with great probability, rather certainty, regarded by me, as part of

the original MS. of 'Plain Dealing; or News from New England' . . . James Savage Boston (N.E.) 12 May 1820" (Lechford, unpaginated blank page).

21. Sarah Sharma has argued that the temporalities of global capitalism interpolate subjects differently, such that although a business traveler and a taxi driver might share space in a taxicab, they occupy distinct temporalities of work and life that are interconnected but accorded differing social value. Like taxicab travel, the printing of antiquarian works brings together subjects occupying different social temporalities of labor (printers and scholars, among others). In the same way, the Massachusetts Historical Society reading room brought antiquarians engaged in leisurely study of the past together with "hannh readdig," the woman hired to clean the room in 1821, and other workers like her.

22. In a copy of Savage's edition I consulted at the American Antiquarian Society, the facsimile appears as the frontispiece to the second volume. In all other copies I consulted, it appears between pages 350 (the end of the addenda section) and 351 (the beginning of the appendix).

23. The term "remediation" originated with Bolter and Grusin.

24. See also Bolter and Grusin on "transparent immediacy" (21–31).

25. On this topic, see the essays by Roland; Werner; Schulze; Bornstein; and West; all found in the cluster "Anglo-American Facsimiles" in the autumn 2011 issue of *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*.

26. Note, though, that optical character recognition works better with print than manuscript, because the individuation of handwriting undermines the effectiveness of character-recognition software. For a striking illumination of other instances where optical character recognition falters, see Trettien.

27. On the digital's privileging of vision and text, see Kirschenbaum and Werner 419–20; Mak 1519; and Treharne 473.

28. See IFLA Rare Book and Special Collections Section and "Preservation Guidelines."

29. See IFLA Rare Book and Special Collections Section and Perrin 21.

30. On the significance of edges, see Galbraith. The database *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (quod.lib.umich.edu/e/ecco/) uses "fore-edge painting"—paintings executed along the edges of books—as a subject term, but the facsimiles contained under this heading do not show images of their books' edges.

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# Bring Up the Bodies: The Classical Concept of Poetic Vividness and Its Reevaluation in Holocaust Literature

ALAN ITKIN

**W**ESTERN LITERARY THEORY BEGINS LIKE A MURDER MYSTERY: with dead bodies. In book 4 of Plato's *Republic*, the dialogue in which Socrates brands poets as liars and bans them from his ideal city-state for corrupting the city's youth, Socrates tells a story about Leontius, who was walking along the city walls of Athens one day when he came upon the corpses of several executed criminals:

He felt the urge to look at them; at the same time he was disgusted with himself and his morbid curiosity, and he turned away. For a while he was in inner turmoil, resisting his craving to look and covering his eyes. But finally he was overcome by his desire to see. He opened his eyes wide and ran up to the corpses, cursing his own vision: "Now have your way, damn you. Go ahead and feast at this banquet for sordid appetites." (439e–440a)

Aristotle recognized the poetic implications of the scenario that Plato describes here. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle asks why people began to compose poetry in the first place. His answer is that human beings naturally enjoy representations because we learn through them:

A common phenomenon is evidence of this: even when things are painful to look upon—corpses, for instance, or the shapes of the most revolting animals—we take pleasure in viewing highly realistic images of them. The further explanation of this is that learning is delightful. . . . That is why people like seeing images, because as they look at them they understand and work out what each item is. . . . (1448b)<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle uses the scenario of corpse gazing described by Plato as a means of addressing a particularly difficult question for poetic philosophy: If literature puts what it represents before the mind's eye of

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its audience (the classical definition of vividness), what happens when it describes something we should not see, or at least something we should not desire to see or enjoy seeing? Does this make literature a form of voyeurism and therefore unethical? Aristotle's answer—his defense of poetry against the charges leveled by Plato—is that it is acceptable to enjoy reading about gruesome things just as someone may enjoy looking at corpses, because in doing so we are learning something.

These questions inform the work of three authors who write about the Holocaust: the German writers Peter Weiss and W. G. Sebald and the French American writer Jonathan Littell. Plato's and Aristotle's poetic theories might not seem relevant to a discussion of these authors' works for two reasons. First, Holocaust literature is often approached through frameworks of memory arising out of its close relation to and reliance on survivor testimony and not through classical poetic concepts like vividness. Second, after Auschwitz, the assumptions that Plato and Aristotle make about literature and its place in our lives seem naive. Plato's warning that literature may incite political dissent and Aristotle's assertion that it can develop our moral instincts appear feeble in the wake of the Holocaust.

Weiss, Sebald, and Littell, however, did not experience the Holocaust firsthand. Therefore, questions of Holocaust mimesis rather than Holocaust testimony and memory are central to the way that they address the Holocaust—questions that become more relevant for Holocaust literature and scholarship as the era of survivor testimony recedes into the past. Each of their works provides evidence that the particular question Plato and Aristotle raised about poetic vividness and its ethical implications remains valid after the Holocaust and that the scenario of someone gazing at corpses is still a powerful way of addressing this question. Weiss and Sebald do not refer to the Leontius story directly in their

writings, but Littell does. At the beginning of Littell's prizewinning and controversial novel, *Les Bienveillantes* (*The Kindly Ones*), the protagonist, the SS officer Max Aue, comes upon piles of corpses left by the retreating Soviet forces in Lutsk in the Ukraine in the summer of 1941.<sup>2</sup> After a detailed and gruesome description of the corpses, he continues:

Je voulais fermer les yeux, ou mettre la main sur mes yeux, et en même temps je voulais regarder, regarder tout mon saoul et essayer de comprendre par le regard cette chose incompréhensible, là, devant moi, ce vide pour la pensée humaine. Désarmé, je me tournai vers l'officier de l'Abwehr: "Avez-vous lu Platon?" Il me regarda, interloqué: "Quoi?"—"Non, ce n'est rien." (39)

I wanted to close my eyes or put my hand over my eyes, and at the same time I wanted to look, to look as much as I could, and by looking, try to understand, this incomprehensible thing, there, in front of me, this void for human thought. At a loss, I turned to the officer from the Abwehr: "Have you read Plato?" He looked at me, taken aback: "What?"—"No, it's nothing." (34)

Aue, who like Plato's Leontius wants both to look at the corpses and to look away, does not explicitly mention Leontius here. He merely asks the Abwehr officer (a military intelligence officer) who is accompanying him whether he has read Plato. Sixty pages later, however, he confirms that it is this story he has had in mind in this episode (97). The corpse-with-spectator scenario allows Littell to articulate the poetic strategy he employs in addressing the atrocities of the Second World War, including the Holocaust. Later in the book, he makes it clear that his poetic strategy is meant to answer a more disturbing instance of this scenario as well: Heinrich Himmler's infamous Posen speech, in which he invokes corpse gazing as part of his justification of the Nazi's genocide. The corpse-with-spectator scenario runs parallel to scopic scenarios

such as Hans Blumenberg's shipwreck-with-spectator motif and Julia Hell's ruin-gazer scenario.<sup>3</sup> These scenarios have roots in antiquity and permit modern authors to interrogate key philosophical concepts (existence for Blumenberg, empire for Hell). The scenario of gazing at corpses provides a way for literary and philosophical writers to describe the ethical implications of poetic vividness.

That this scenario would play a self-reflective role in the work of the writers I discuss here is, in a way, no wonder. Michael Rothberg argues that writers who confront the Holocaust respond in their works to "a demand for reflection on the formal limits of representation" (7). Or, as Sara R. Horowitz puts it, they "succeed in representing the Holocaust . . . by acknowledging [their] limitations in an inherent self-critique" (29).<sup>4</sup> Weiss, Sebald, and Littell—writers steeped in the classics—realize that reflecting on representation means considering poetic concepts like vividness, which go back to antiquity, alongside tropes like the corpse-with-spectator scenario through which their implications have long been explored. The varied uses to which they put this scenario, however, also reveal that the demands faced by Holocaust writers have changed. The Holocaust represented a crisis for literature, but Weiss, Sebald, and Littell, who belong to three generations of Holocaust authors, view this crisis differently based on their distance from it in time as well as on their personal and family histories. In response to literary crisis, they use the scenario of gazing at corpses to articulate unique poetic philosophies that reflect their different perspectives.

### Vividness and the Scenario of Gazing at Corpses in Classical Poetics

Writing during the reign of Augustus in the first century BCE, the Greek historian, rhetorician, and critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus defines "vividness" in his treatise on the Attic orator Lysias:

Vividness [*enargeia*] . . . consists in a certain power [Lysias] has of conveying the things he is describing to the senses of his audience, and it arises out of his grasp of circumstantial detail. Nobody who applies his mind to the speeches of Lysias will be so obtuse, insensitive or slow-witted that he will not feel that he can see the actions which are being described going on and that he is meeting face-to-face the characters in the orator's story. (33)

Plato and Aristotle were writing more than three centuries earlier (although Lysias was a contemporary of Plato's).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless they clearly share Dionysius's sense that vivid writing can make readers see with their mind's eye what is being described as if they were present. In the *Ion*, a dialogue that like the *Republic* takes poetry as a central theme, Socrates asks Ion, a rhapsode, or reciter of epic poetry, the following questions:

When you produce the greatest effect upon the audience in the recitation of some striking passage . . . are you in your right mind? Are you not carried out of yourself, and does not your soul in an ecstasy seem to be among the persons or places of which you are speaking . . . ? And are you aware that you produce similar effects on most spectators? (535b–d)

Both Ion and the members of the audience imagine the scene, sensing it around them as if they were present.<sup>6</sup> This sense that poetry can make its audience see a described scene as if they were present also informs Plato's famous comparison of poetic representation to a mirror held up to the world in book 10 of the *Republic*. With a mirror, Socrates says, "Quickly you will produce the sun and the things of heaven; quickly the earth; quickly yourself; quickly all the animals, plants, contrivances, and every other object we just mentioned" (596d–e). But, his interlocutor protests, a mirror can only produce the appearance of what it reflects. Precisely, says Socrates, and it is exactly the same with painting and poetry. Poetic description, in other words, is a mirror

reflecting images to our mind's eye of things that are not present.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle writes that the tragic poet should "put [the events] before his eyes as much as he can. In this way, seeing them vividly [*enargestata*] as if he were actually present at the actions [he represents], he can discover what is suitable, and is least likely to miss contradictions" (1455a). Aristotle anticipates Dionysius's definition of vividness as seeing an imagined scene as if one were present at it. The tragic poet, Aristotle tells us, should imagine the scene in his own mind before composing a play. Aristotle assumes, however, that a vivid sense of a scene can be produced in the minds of the audience as well. In explaining why tragedy is superior to epic poetry, he writes, "Again, [tragedy] has no small part of music and spectacles, by means of which its pleasures are constructed very vividly [*enargestata*]. Next it has vividness [*to enarges*] in reading as well as in performance" (1462a). Vividness is not just something that exists in the mind of the poet but an effect that can be produced through reading as well. The audience, too, can see the events "very vividly as if they were present."

Both Plato and Aristotle thus agree with Dionysius's claim that vivid writing has the "power . . . of conveying the things it is describing to the senses of its audience" (33). Socrates's story of Leontius gazing at corpses in book 4 of the *Republic*, however, seems at first to have little to do with poetic vividness or with poetry at all. Socrates makes several charges against poetry in the *Republic*: that it corrupts the youth by undermining the teaching of values that will make them upright citizens (books 2–3), that it is an imitation of an imitation and thus at the third remove from the truth (book 10), and that it reinforces the audience's susceptibility to harmful emotions (book 10). The last of these claims most clearly echoes the Leontius story.

After the comparison of poetry to a mirror held up to the world, Socrates returns

to one of the *Republic*'s central themes: the divided mind. "Is a man ever of two minds about the same thing? When it comes to action, is he divided against himself? . . . We found sufficient agreement in previous discussions that our souls are always teeming with ten thousand such contradictions" (603c–d). The reasoning side of the mind, he goes on to argue, is difficult for the poet to imitate and is boring for the audience to hear about. Poets therefore tend to represent weepy and choleric characters. They appeal to our worst side, the part that is not constrained by reason, and support its eternal struggle with the reasoning part. Poetry's antipathy to reason is sufficient cause for banning the poet from his ideal state: "Because he calls forth the worst elements in the soul and then nourishes them and makes them strong, he destroys the soul's reasoning part" (605b).

Poetry, Socrates says, has the power to corrupt those who are susceptible to appeals based on excessive emotion. Vivid poetry, the kind that makes us feel as if we were present at the described scene, however, has the power to corrupt even the best people, because it makes us identify with good characters who give vent to their sorrow and rage when they encounter trouble (605c–d).<sup>7</sup> It therefore indulges the longing that even the best people have to express these emotions and develops in them the habit of giving in to their emotions. Finally, poetry strengthens not just the emotions but also the harmful desires created by them: "Sex, anger, and the desires, as well as all the pleasures and pains that make their presence felt in whatever we do—on all these poetry has the same effect. It makes them grow instead of drying them up" (606d).

This is poetry's ultimate crime: it satisfies the audience's aberrant desires and thus strengthens those desires, allowing them to overpower the rational side of the mind. The audience of vivid poetry experiences a kind of seeing in their minds that is also a surrender to aberrant desires. This is exactly how we

might describe Leontius's gaze at the corpses in book 4 of the *Republic*. Socrates explains the story as an illustration of the principle of the divided mind, the same principle he turns to in introducing his final objection to poetry, thus signaling a link between these two passages.<sup>8</sup> Here, however, he tells us that anger is not always on the side of unrestrained desire. The healthy kind of anger, unlike the kind that Socrates classifies as a harmful desire in book 10, finds expression in Leontius's indignation at his own actions:

Leontius' behavior shows that desire and anger are two different things and sometimes go to war with one another. . . . We often see this kind of behavior where a man's desires overmaster his reason. This results in his reproaching himself for tolerating the violence going on within himself. In this situation a man's soul can resemble a city riven by two warring factions. (440a–b)

When Leontius gazes at the corpses, he is succumbing to aberrant desire, just as, according to Socrates, the audience of vivid poetry does. It is not hard to read the Leontius story as a companion to Socrates's discussion in book 10 of the ethical implications of poetic vividness.

This is how Aristotle seems to read it when he evokes the scenario of gazing at corpses in his explanation of poetry's origins, specifically in the human tendencies to create representations and to learn by doing so. The *Poetics* is in part a response to Plato's attacks on poetry in the *Republic*.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle even addresses head-on the charge that Plato's Socrates considers his most serious. Far from habituating the audience to giving in to harmful emotions, Aristotle tells us, poetry educates the emotions by allowing the audience to exercise its emotional energies in response to appropriate objects—the famous idea of *catharsis* (1449b).<sup>10</sup> In using the scenario of corpse gazing to explain poetry's origins, Aristotle is defending poetry against the charge Plato evokes by means of the same scenario.

Aristotle argues that poetry's vividness, even when it shows the audience terrible things, does not produce in the audience an aberrant form of seeing because vivid images teach us the proper response to terrible experiences.

### Peter Weiss's Ultimate Pictures

For the generations of Europeans and Americans alive in the years immediately following the Second World War, the taboo against looking at corpses implicit in Plato's and Aristotle's evocation of this scenario would seem to be hopelessly outdated. Everybody had seen images of the bodies of those who had died in the war, especially the images of the piles of corpses discovered by the Allies when they liberated the Nazi death camps. Peter Weiss was born in Germany to a Jewish father and a Christian mother, but he survived the war primarily in Sweden. In his autobiographical novel *Fluchtpunkt* (*Vanishing Point*), he registers the shock that he, along with many others of his generation, experienced when encountering these images for the first time. In an episode in which his alter ego watches newsreel footage from the camps in a movie theater in Stockholm, he writes:

Dort vor uns, zwischen den Leichenbergen, kauerten die Gestalten der äußersten Erniedrigung, in ihren gestreiften Lumpen. . . . Wo war der Styx, wo war das Inferno, wo war Orpheus in seiner Unterwelt, von Flötenrillern umrieselt, wo waren die großen Visionen der Kunst, die Bildwerke, die Skulpturen, die Tempel, die Gesänge und Epen. Es war alles zerstäubt, und nie mehr konnte daran gedacht werden, nach neuen Gleichnissen, nach Haltepunkten zu suchen, vor diesen endgültigen Bildern. . . . Und dann sahen wir sie, die Wächter dieser Welt, sie trugen keine Hörner, keine Schwänze, sie trugen Uniformen, und gängstigt scharten sie sich zusammen und mußten die Toten zu den Massengräbern tragen. (246)

There in front of us, among the mountains of corpses, cowered the shapes of utter

humiliation in their striped rags. . . . Where was the Styx, where the Inferno, where was Orpheus in his underworld, surrounded by the rippling trill of flutes, where the great visions of art, the paintings, sculptures, temples, songs and epics. Everything was reduced to dust and we could never think again of looking for new comparisons, for points of departure in the face of these ultimate pictures. . . . And then we saw them, the guardians of this world: they had no horns, no tails, they wore uniforms and they huddled together in fear and had to carry the dead to the mass graves. (195)

Weiss explains that encountering these images of the Holocaust not only was a formative experience for his generation but also precipitated a crisis for literature. These “ultimate pictures,” including “mountains of corpses” and camp guards “carry[ing] the dead to the mass graves,” negate the value of the great works of literature—works like those by Virgil, Ovid, and Dante, which Weiss alludes to in this passage—because these works do not offer us any means of coming to terms with these images. At stake in this crisis is literature’s ability to create vivid images. The great works have nothing to tell us about the Holocaust because the “visions” they produce are incompatible with the images of the Holocaust Weiss describes as “ultimate pictures.” On the one hand, we have aesthetically pleasing poetic images; on the other, images of corpses and those who lived among them. Any attempt to turn the latter into the former would be repugnant.<sup>11</sup>

These ultimate pictures, however, also have a powerful effect on Weiss’s alter ego: they force him to pick sides.<sup>12</sup> As one who would have been considered Jewish according to Nazi race laws but who was raised in Germany outside a Jewish community, Weiss cannot be sure whether he should consider himself on the side of the suffering victims or the guilty perpetrators. Nor is this a moot point now that the war is over—Weiss, like Theodor W. Adorno, believed that the strug-

gle against the forces that brought about the Holocaust is never really over.<sup>13</sup> His ambiguous position means that every action he takes (or refuses to take) will be a choice: to stand against those who committed these crimes and might commit them again or to abet them, if only by not standing in their way. Recognizing this fact will profoundly affect the way he approaches his work as an artist and writer.<sup>14</sup> In *Vanishing Point* Weiss stages the scenario of gazing at corpses as a realization of the demand to take sides. Corpses, for Weiss, are not taboo images from which he must look away but images that he feels compelled to see in the right way: as a call to arms.

The particular demand to take sides that Weiss and his alter ego feel stems from his position as one who cannot unambiguously identify with either the victim or the perpetrator. But this is, as Adorno had already argued when Weiss wrote *Vanishing Point*, the position of the Western subject after Auschwitz, whose every choice, including whether to write poetry, is a decision between barbarism and its opposite (“Cultural Criticism”). Seen in this way, the images of mass graves and mountains of corpses that Weiss’s alter ego encounters in the movie theater are not so much an invalidation of literature as a test of it. If the visions literature produces can have the same effect on the audience that these ultimate pictures had on Weiss’s alter ego in *Vanishing Point*, forcing him to recognize his responsibility to take sides, they constitute a valuable response to the Holocaust. This is how Weiss answers Adorno’s charges against poetry after Auschwitz. Literature is fully justified if it can make others see the horrors of the past in the same way that film images of the Holocaust made Weiss see them. In *Vanishing Point*, however, Weiss does not conclude whether literature can make readers see the horrors of the past in this way.

Weiss’s artistic and literary career shows a long fascination with images of gazing at corpses. In 1944 and 1946 (not long before

and not long after the scene in the movie theater in *Vanishing Point*) Weiss, who was then still trying to make his career as an artist, painted two scenes showing anatomists dissecting cadavers. The scenes are modern updates of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson*, as Sebald notes in an essay on Weiss, "Die Zerknirschung des Herzens" ("The Remorse of the Heart"). The earlier painting is more gruesome—the anatomist holds the knife in one hand and one of the cadaver's organs in the other—but the later one is more disturbing. Three men dressed in gowns and surrounded by organs in glass jars sit facing the body. The body's face is covered, obscuring its identity, and the dispassionate way in which the men seem to be carrying on a discussion while leaning back in their chairs makes it clear that the individual whose body this was has effectively been erased, just like the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>15</sup> This image is a provocation: either to accept the observers' disregard for the dead man and thus to take a position among those who are indifferent to his fate or to be outraged by the casual way they have erased the individual and thus to stand on the side of the dead.

Weiss came to understand that vivid literary images could have the same effect on the audience as his painting, provoking the audience to take sides with or against the perpetrators of the violence those images depict. This insight allowed Weiss to answer the question he could not answer in *Vanishing Point*—can literature convince us to take sides in an ongoing struggle against the barbarism that brought about the Holocaust?—a decade and a half later in his three-volume magnum opus, the thousand-page novel about the resistance to fascism, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (The Aesthetics of Resistance). Once again the scenario of gazing at corpses is the means by which he articulates his poetics of political provocation.

Weiss's novel is interspersed with descriptive set pieces, scenes in which his narra-

tor and his comrades view and analyze works of art. The novel begins, for example, in 1937 with three characters standing before the famous Pergamon frieze in Berlin, a work that depicts a struggle between the Greek gods and the giants that in the characters' view parallels the struggle against fascism. In these episodes, Weiss's characters consider how art may be enlisted by the Resistance. The episodes explore not only the aesthetics of resistance that informs these works of visual art but also the poetics of resistance that undergirds his novel. Weiss intended the novel as a contribution to what he saw as a continuing struggle against the forces of oppression.<sup>16</sup> At the novel's close, the narrator recalls the opening description of the Pergamon frieze, telling us that he can now see the characters of the narrative, some of whom have become the victims of fascism, among the figures on the partially ruined frieze:

Ich würde mich vor den Fries begeben, auf dem die Söhne und Töchter der Erde sich gegen die Gewalten erhoben, die ihnen immer wieder nehmen wollten, was sie sich erkämpft hatten, Coppis Eltern und meine Eltern würde ich sehn im Geröll. . . . Heilmann würde Rimbaud zitieren, und Coppi das Manifest sprechen . . . (1195–96)

I would stand before the frieze, on which the sons and the daughters of the earth rose up against the powers that always wanted to take from them what they had struggled to attain, I would see Coppi's parents and my parents among the debris. . . . Heilmann would cite Rimbaud, and Coppi would read the Manifesto aloud . . .<sup>17</sup>

This is just one moment of many in which Weiss's narrator explicitly compares the story he is telling with that depicted in the Pergamon frieze. It is in his description of the characters' encounter with two paintings, however, that the scenario of looking at corpses becomes an opportunity for Weiss to explore the question of how literature

could have the effect he demands in *Vanishing Point*, making the audience recognize the need to choose sides. In their discussion of Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*, the characters point to the stylized figures of dead bodies, as well as to the evocative and unrestrained depiction of the grief of those who observe the bodies, as the means by which the painting forces the viewer to recognize the stakes not only of this struggle but of all political struggles. All the great revolutions of the modern period, the narrator tells us, were "in dem großen Bild von Guernica enthalten" ("contained in the large picture of Guernica"), and it is through the warped, abstract images of "dem Gefallnen, dem [sterbenden] Pferd, der Frau mit dem [toten] Kind" ("the fallen man, the [dying] horse, the woman with the [dead] child"), depicting without restraint the effects of the air assault on Guernica, that Picasso makes present the true horror done to the victims of Guernica: "Hier war der Schmerz unverhüllt" ("Here the pain was undisguised") (421–22).

In his explication of Théodore Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, Weiss's narrator considers how the painting positions the viewer on the side of the dead and dying whose bodies the painting depicts on the raft, victims of colonial greed and class oppression (some officers were abandoned on the raft when the colonial frigate *Medusa* sank in 1816, but it was overwhelmingly the common sailors and soldiers who died on the raft):

Der Beschauer, so hatte es der Maler gewollt, sollte . . . sich in unmittelbarer Nähe des Floßes wännen, es sollte ihm scheinen, als hinge er, mit verkrampftem Griff, an einem der vorspringenden Bretter, zu matt schon, um die Rettung noch erleben zu können. Ihr, die ihr vor diesem Bild steht, so sagte der Maler, seid die Verlorenen, denen, die ihr verlassen habt, gehört die Hoffnung. (478–79)

The painter intended the viewer to imagine himself in immediate proximity to the raft.

. . . [I]t should appear to him as if he were hanging, with cramped grip, on one of the boards jutting out, already too weak to be able to survive rescue. You, who stand before this picture, the painter is saying, are the lost ones; hope belongs to those you have left behind.

Géricault forces us to identify with the dead and dying on the raft and thus to recognize that we too are potential victims of the forces that brought about their deaths. Can literature do what Picasso and Géricault do, positioning us in a scene of "undisguised pain" to convince us to take sides in the depicted struggle? Weiss attempts to answer this question in the so-called Plötzensee episode from the novel's third volume, which describes the execution of several members of the Resistance.<sup>18</sup> The scene is described from the perspective of a prison supervisor, Schwarz, who is clearly troubled by his role in the execution—there is a bitter irony in the way he reassures himself that "[e]r könnte von sich sagen, daß er . . . den Männern bis zuletzt zur Seite gestanden habe" ("he could say of himself that he . . . had stood by the side of these men until the end" [1130]). When a curtain is literally pulled back, we see the dead bodies of the Resistance members through Schwarz's eyes: "Da hingen sie alle, unter der Schiene, der Hals lang gezerrt, der Kopf abgeknickt, zu erkennen waren sie nicht mehr, nur ihrer Reihenfolge nach hätte Schwarz ihre Namen noch nennen können . . ." ("There they all hung, under the rail, their necks yanked far out, their heads snapped off, they could no longer be recognized, only by [recalling] the order [in which they were hanged] could Schwarz have named them . . ." [1135]). Like the body in Weiss's 1946 anatomy painting or the nameless corpses piled up in the death camps, these bodies have lost the individuality of the people who once inhabited them. It is up to the reader to decide if the vivid image of the hanged bodies, seen through the eyes of one who wants to stand beside them, causes one to recognize the necessity of tak-

ing sides in the fight against the barbarism that brought about this atrocity.<sup>19</sup>

### W. G. Sebald and the Medusa's Head

For Weiss, a committed communist, the Holocaust is just one of many crimes committed on behalf of the ruling class in a continuing class struggle. He makes this perspective clear in his play about the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, *Die Ermittlung* (1965; *The Investigation*), in which he emphasizes the complicity of German capitalists in the Holocaust.<sup>20</sup> It is not strange to link his consideration of the execution of Resistance members during the Second World War to his considerations of the Holocaust in *Vanishing Point* and elsewhere. Weiss does not describe the horrors of the Holocaust in detail in *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, but, as Robert Buch has pointed out, he does evoke them indirectly ("Laokoons ältester Sohn" 165). After witnessing the deportation and murder of Jews by German soldiers, the narrator's mother is paralyzed and struck dumb by the experience, turned to stone, as the narrator describes her, like one who has seen the Medusa (*Ästhetik* 878).

Sebald was born a quarter century after Weiss and began his literary career after Weiss's death in 1982. The shock of the first encounter with images of the Holocaust was not a formative experience for his generation. Handling gruesome images of the Holocaust with care had become newly important for writers and artists now that those images were no longer seared on the consciousness of their generation. However, Sebald's works are all about showing us the bodies. The literary prose works *Die Ringe des Saturn* (*The Rings of Saturn*) and *Austerlitz* prominently feature photographs of skulls and skeletons among the images Sebald includes with his texts. *The Rings of Saturn* includes a photograph, taking up two pages of the book, of bodies among the trees outside the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen (78–79). The bodies in

the photograph, though, are difficult to make out and the image is not really explained by the text. *The Rings of Saturn*, like Weiss's *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, also includes a long explication of a work of art, Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson*, which Sebald linked to Weiss's anatomy paintings in his essay on Weiss. In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald emphasizes the way that Rembrandt's painting makes the viewer see the violence done to the dead man on the dissection table, a convicted burglar named Aris Kindt who was executed for his crimes, although none of the figures in the painting appear to notice this violence:

Mit ihm, dem Opfer, und nicht mit der Gilde, die ihm den Auftrag gab, setzt der Maler sich gleich. Er allein hat nicht den starren cartesianischen Blick, er allein nimmt ihn wahr, den ausgelöschten, grünlichen Leib, sieht den Schatten in dem halboffenen Mund und über dem Auge des Toten. (27)

It is with him, the victim, and not the Guild that gave Rembrandt his commission, that the painter identifies. His gaze alone is free of Cartesian rigidity. He alone sees that greenish annihilated body, and he alone sees the shadow in the half-open mouth and over the dead man's eyes. (17)

Sebald's reading of Rembrandt's painting is remarkably similar to Weiss's reading of filmed and pictorial images of dead bodies in *Vanishing Point* and *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. The painting makes viewers see the body in a different way, provoking them to choose sides, just as Rembrandt himself has chosen sides, between the dead man and those who are indifferent to the violence done to him. Sebald, unlike Weiss, does not directly connect this choice to the commitment to a side in a continuing class struggle. Like Weiss's, Sebald's explication of Rembrandt's painting is really a description of the poetic philosophy that guides *The Rings of Saturn* and his literary works in general, which, time and again, bring to light the

violence done to the victims of modern Western history, especially when that violence has been purposely erased or obscured by a narrative of progress.<sup>21</sup>

Sebald, thus, frames his work as an attempt to make us see the bodies. In *The Rings of Saturn* he really does show us the bodies of Holocaust victims, although in a way that makes it difficult for the viewers to be certain what they are seeing. Elsewhere, however, he describes the poetic philosophy that undergirds his literary works in seemingly contradictory terms. In a profile of the author that appeared in *The Guardian* in 2001, Sebald picks up the Medusa metaphor Weiss uses in *The Aesthetics of Resistance* to convey the effect of witnessing the Holocaust:

I try to keep at a distance and never invade. . . . I don't think you can focus on the horror of the Holocaust. It's like the head of the Medusa: you carry it with you in a sack, but if you looked at it you'd be petrified. I was trying to write the lives of some people who'd survived—the "lucky ones." If they were so fraught, you can extrapolate. But I didn't see it; I only know things indirectly. (qtd. in Jaggi)<sup>22</sup>

Sebald has turned Medusa into a corpse: it is no longer the face of the living Gorgon that he describes but her head in a bag. Sebald once again evokes the scenario of looking at corpses, but with a difference. This time he says he will not make us see the body that stands in for the horrors of the Holocaust, although the reader will feel it as a burden carried by his works. He is addressing what Richard Eder has aptly described as Sebald's tendency to present a "Holocaust-in-absence," to evoke the Holocaust without describing it directly. Born in Germany in 1944, Sebald could not have witnessed the Holocaust.<sup>23</sup> Any attempt to create a vivid vision of the Holocaust in his works, to make readers see it with the mind's eye as if they were present, would be a violation, an "invasion" as he says here. The act of seeing that is simultaneously

an invasion implies a libidinal investment in the seen object, which means that we are back with Plato's Leontius, who desires to see and is simultaneously indignant with himself for his desire.<sup>24</sup>

In comparing the way his works address the Holocaust to not looking directly at the horrors, Sebald describes his poetics in terms strikingly different from those he used in his consideration of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson* in *The Rings of Saturn*. He reveals an ambivalence embodied by the simultaneous presence and absence of the Holocaust in his literary works, a conflict between the desire to see the dead bodies and the horrors they represent and the demand, in response to that desire, to look away.<sup>25</sup> This ambivalence marks his method of addressing the Holocaust and the other horrors of the historical past as inherently self-contradictory, torn between two conflicting, simultaneous goals—to make us see the horrors and to look away, thereby allowing us to look away too. Another image evoked by Sebald in the quotation from the *Guardian* profile offers a resolution to this contradiction. Sebald tells us that he cannot "focus" on the horrors of the Holocaust. The blurry, out-of-focus view of the corpse at the edge of one's vision, like the indistinct photograph of dead bodies outside Bergen-Belsen in *The Rings of Saturn*, is Sebald's metaphor for the way that his works represent the Holocaust and avoid the charge of voyeurism: they create an out-of-focus image of the horrors of the past, an image that, while not inaccurate, does not claim to make us see the horrors of the past as if we were present.<sup>26</sup>

A blurry view also drives us to see more clearly what we are looking at. *Austerlitz* is the work Sebald was discussing when he said he could not "focus" on the horror of the Holocaust. For Jacques Austerlitz, the book's protagonist, who was saved from his parents' fate in the Holocaust by the *Kindertransporte*, the horrors of the past are literally out of focus. They haunt him in the form

of hallucinatory visions he sees as if “durch eine Art von treibendem Rauch oder Schleier hindurch” (“through a drifting veil or cloud of smoke” [187; 127]), or of figures in a disintegrating film of the Theresienstadt ghetto, “[deren] Körperformen . . . unscharf geworden [waren]” (“the contours of [whose] bodies were blurred” [353; 247]).<sup>27</sup> Austerlitz learns how to bring this past into focus: he reads authors, such as H. G. Adler, who described their firsthand experience of the Holocaust with great precision. Adler’s description of Theresienstadt, he says, “mir . . . Einblicke eröffnete in das, was ich mir . . . nicht hatte vorstellen können” (“gave me insight into matters I could never have imagined” [338; 233]).<sup>28</sup> The tantalizingly blurry view of the past that Sebald’s works provide, and the “insight [*Einblicke*]” offered by the authors he cites in evoking this past, add up to what Sebald elsewhere calls “[d]er synoptische Blick” (“the synoptic view”) by which literature can function as a “Versuch der Restitution” (“attempt at restitution”) for “das größte Unrecht” (“the greatest injustice”) (“Versuch” 248; “Attempt” 205).<sup>29</sup> Sebald has it both ways: his out-of-focus view of the horrors of the past protects him from the charge of voyeurism, while his evocative citations of those who experienced them show us how to see those horrors more clearly.

### Jonathan Littell’s Unwavering Gaze

No one could accuse Littell of giving readers a “Holocaust-in-absence.” *The Kindly Ones* is characterized by the unrelenting presence of the horrors surrounding the Second World War, including the Holocaust. Littell continually stages scenes in which the protagonist, the SS officer Max Aue, sees corpses, which are described in gruesome detail.<sup>30</sup> Littell was born in 1967 in the United States and raised in France. The demand not to do further injustice to the victims of the Holocaust—not to “invade,” as Sebald says—is less of a pressing concern for Littell than it was for Sebald,

a German who grew up after the war and whose father was an officer in the Wehrmacht. Nevertheless, Littell feels the imperative not to turn the Holocaust into a source of voyeuristic pleasure.

When Aue first alludes to the story of Leontius, he is gazing at and describing in horrific detail the corpses of people executed by retreating Soviet forces. He returns to the story, addressing it in greater detail, in the context of the Holocaust. After witnessing Wehrmacht soldiers watching and enjoying a mass execution of Jews in Zhitomir, Aue reads the Leontius story in the *Republic*, quoting it in its entirety, including the moment when Leontius indignantly admonishes his eyes, “Voilà, soyez maudits, repaissez-vous de ce joli spectacle!” (“There! you devils! gaze your fill at the beautiful spectacle!” [*Les Bienveillantes* 97; *Kindly Ones* 98]). In quoting the story here, Littell demonstrates a concern not just with the disturbing voyeurism of the soldiers but also with the question Plato’s story raises for literary theory, especially for literature that addresses the Holocaust: How can literature be justified if it encourages a repugnant desire to see the horrors it puts before our mind’s eye? The passage follows a number of vivid descriptions of mass killings, and Littell signals that it is meant to address the reader’s view of these events by prefacing his reading of Plato with the words “le désir de voir ces choses était humain, aussi” (“the desire to see these things was also human” [97; 98]). It is, after all, as fellow “frères humains” (“human brothers” [11; 3]) that Aue has addressed the audience at the beginning of the novel.

In crafting a literary response to the Holocaust in *The Kindly Ones*, Littell is concerned with more than just avoiding the charge of turning the horrors of the past into a lurid spectacle. Aue is disturbed by the soldiers’ enjoyment of the “beautiful spectacle” of the executions because it contradicts the sentiment expressed by another infamous instance of the corpse-with-spectator motif.

In a speech he gave in Posen on 4 October 1943, Himmler told a group of senior SS officers that even if their work required them to see “a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred, or a thousand,” those who oversaw the so-called “Endlösung” (“final solution”) would be innocent of wrongdoing as long as they remained decent men in their souls (LaCapra, *History* 28). Aue discusses this speech later in *The Kindly Ones*, claiming that he attended a similar speech Himmler gave on 6 October that same year.

It is tempting to see in Himmler’s words an allusion to Plato’s Leontius story. The importance of classical cultures to the Nazi leadership has been well documented, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, among others, have noted a resonance between the political philosophy of the *Republic* and Nazi ideology.<sup>31</sup> Clearly Himmler wants to separate the moral responsibility of performing the killings from that of overseeing them. He shares Plato’s sense that looking at dead bodies in the “wrong way” can compromise the individual’s ability to function as a tool of the state. For Aue the soldiers’ indecent enjoyment of watching the execution contradicts Himmler’s claim that one could remain decent in one’s soul after being associated with such horrific actions. Later he will dismiss Himmler’s separation of the ethical implications of seeing the killings from the implications of committing them. Revealing his participation in mass executions to his sister, Aue tells her, “je considère que regarder engage autant ma responsabilité que faire” (“I consider that watching involves my responsibility as much as doing” [445; 482]).<sup>32</sup>

For Littell, one of the central issues arising from the Holocaust is the question of guilt. Weiss and Sebald were also interested in the problem of assigning guilt for the Nazis’ crimes, not just to the perpetrators and bystanders but also to those who belonged in any way to a community that allowed Nazism and the Holocaust to come about. Paradoxi-

cally, though, the greater distance between the Holocaust and Littell, writing at a time when the generation of victims and perpetrators is passing away, broadens the scope of the question to include his audience. In interviews, he has claimed that the Nazis’ crimes challenge the juridical frameworks, based on Judeo-Christian ethics, by which we assess guilt today (Georgesco). In *The Kindly Ones*, he brings modern understandings of guilt into dialogue with an ancient one: that embodied by the Eumenides, or “Kindly Ones,” who in Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* seek vengeance on Orestes and refuse to consider the circumstances of his crime.<sup>33</sup> Throughout the novel, Aue repeatedly claims that readers cannot be certain what they would have done in his place. The perpetrators were human beings and their actions were therefore not inhuman but ones that anyone might be capable of. If we accept this claim, he suggests, we also have to accept that as fellow human beings we are susceptible to charges of collective guilt for the Nazis’ crimes, what Karl Jaspers refers to as the “metaphysical guilt” that can afflict even those who had no responsibility for the crimes (55–57). Littell forces us to confront the dilemma of choosing between, on the one hand, a framework of Eumenidean guilt that would only take into account the actual deed and not the intentions behind it and, on the other hand, a collective guilt that afflicts us all.<sup>34</sup> If, as Aue claims, “watching” involves one’s “responsibility” as much as one’s response and if, as Littell suggests in quoting the Leontius story, reading vivid descriptions is itself a form of watching, then vivid descriptions of the Holocaust and the bodies of its victims might provide a way to make the reader answer this question of guilt.

In evoking the scenario of gazing at corpses, Littell articulates two aims of the post-Holocaust poetics that undergirds his text: to prevent the reader from enjoying the lurid spectacle of the Nazis’ crimes and to make the reader confront the question of guilt. Like Weiss, Littell wants not just to

avoid the charge of aestheticizing the Holocaust but to provoke the reader as well. However, Littell's solution for constructing a means of addressing the Holocaust that embodies these two aims differs from Weiss's. It is in fact the same solution that Leontius finds: he will pry readers' eyes open, making them see corpses until they have had their fill. Littell will make us look at corpses far beyond the stage where we derive any thrill from such sordid sights, to the point where our desire to see turns into nausea, like the nausea that Aue experiences in retrospect at the thought of the corpses he had seen.

The strategy Littell articulates for addressing the Holocaust through the Leontius story thus focuses, unlike Weiss's and Sebald's strategies do, on the quantity rather than the quality of the visions of corpses in the text's representation of the Holocaust. Aue, clearly standing in for the author, claims that he will not describe in detail the murder of prisoners in the death camps, because these camps "sont archiconnues et détaillées dans de nombreux livres" ("are very well known and are described in many other books" [*Les Bienveillantes* 563; *Kindly Ones* 612]). He does, however, include vivid descriptions of corpses while narrating the death marches from Auschwitz, when, just ahead of the Soviet liberation of the camp, thousands of prisoners were evacuated to other camps and many were killed by guards or succumbed to exhaustion and starvation along the way. Littell's treatment of the executions by *Einsatzgruppen* ("deployment groups," a Nazi euphemism for SS death squads) in the Ukraine is even more gruesome. In describing the infamous mass execution at Babi Yar, in which he himself participates, Aue tells us, "Pour atteindre certains blessés, il fallait marcher sur les corps, cela glissait affreusement, les chairs blanches et molles roulaient sous mes bottes, les os se brisaient traîtreusement et me faisaient trébucher, je m'enfonçais jusqu'aux chevilles dans la boue et le sang" ("To reach some of the

wounded, you had to walk over bodies, it was terribly slippery, the limp white flesh rolled under my boots, bones snapped treacherously and made me stumble, I sank up to my ankles in mud and blood" [125; 128]). If, after a thousand pages of such descriptions, we are nauseated rather than titillated by the violence they represent, and if they make us ask ourselves what we would have done in Aue's place, then Littell has accomplished what he set out to do.

In their introduction to the volume *"After Testimony": The Ethics and Aesthetics of Holocaust Narrative for the Future*, Jakob Lothe, Susan Rubin Suleiman, and James Phelan suggest that the fact that "[i]n a few years, there will be no living survivors of the Holocaust" means that we are entering a new era in the literary response to the Holocaust (1). Their point is not that aesthetic and poetic questions raised by writing about the Holocaust are only now coming to the fore among literary writers and their critics but that the aesthetic and poetic questions writers and critics face are destined to change, given the more distant relation literary works that respond to the Holocaust will have to survivor testimonies. I agree with these authors that aesthetic and poetic questions were at the heart of Holocaust literature from the beginning. I would go further than they would, though, and argue that the centrality of paradigms of testimony and memory to Holocaust literature and to its reception has obscured an important aspect of that literature—namely, that writers who address the Holocaust have been engaged in a thorough reevaluation and rehabilitation of poetic concepts derived from antiquity in response to the crisis for literature constituted by the Holocaust.

Concepts like vividness were woven into Western poetics at its start, and they have never left it. The Holocaust, though, invalidated the assumptions about literature's social and political roles under whose influence these concepts were originally articulated.

As Weiss, Sebald, and Littell recognize, this means that Holocaust authors cannot meet Holocaust literature's inherent "demand for reflection on the formal limits of representation" unless they take on the project of reevaluating these concepts and of conceiving new poetic philosophies based on that reevaluation (Rothberg 7). Weiss, Sebald, and Littell use the scenario of gazing at corpses, originally evoked by Plato and Aristotle to address the ethical implications of poetic vividness, in ways that reveal their contributions to this project and that reflect their own perspectives on the Holocaust. Weiss, a German of Jewish heritage who survived the Second World War in exile, wants his readers to see the bodies and the horrors they represent in a way that provokes them to recognize their responsibility to choose sides in a continuing struggle against those who might bring about another Holocaust. Sebald, a German born at the end of the war, claims that he will make us see the corpses not directly but only in the blurry zone at the edge of our vision. He encourages us to go beyond what his works provide and thereby to bring the horrors of the Holocaust into focus on our own. Littell, born in the United States a quarter century after the war and raised in France, piles up the bodies. He makes us see one corpse after another to extinguish any pleasure we may have in the spectacle of the horrors of the past and to make us face the question of collective guilt raised by the Nazis' crimes. By enacting these poetic philosophies in their works, these authors offer us three models of vivid literary writing that reflect Holocaust literature's changing response to the crisis for literature embodied by the Holocaust.

## NOTES

I want to thank Julia Hell, Leslie A. Adelson, Erin McGlothlin, and Seth Howes for their helpful advice.

1. Here I quote Kenny's translation, because it is more to the point. All other quotations from the *Poetics* are from Janko's translation.

2. For the overwhelmingly negative reception of Littell's novel in Germany, see Theweleit. The critical reaction to Littell's novel has been mixed in England and even in France, where the novel won the Prix Goncourt and the Grand Prix du Roman of the Académie Française. In the United States, the reception of *The Kindly Ones* has been more negative than positive.

3. Hell defines "scopic scenarios" as "constellations that organize or structure acts of looking, their subjects, and their objects in an imaginary space" ("Imperial Ruin Gazers" 170).

4. Rothberg's and Horowitz's discussions of "limits" and "limitations" of representation allude to the seminal work of Friedländer, who has argued that "there are limits to representation *which should not be but can easily be transgressed*" (3).

5. For comprehensive discussions of the concept of vividness in classical poetics and rhetoric, see Koelb 27–36 and Bussels 57–83.

6. Stephen Halliwell cites several works containing the "as if present" motif, including Homer's *Odyssey*, Plato's *Ion*, and writing by Dionysius and Quintilian (20n48).

7. Plato draws this same connection between vividness and the ability to inspire strong emotion in the audience in the *Ion* (535c–e), and this link also becomes part of the classical discourse of vividness—e.g., Quintilian, bk. 6, ch. 2, sec. 32.

8. On the relation of the Leontius story to the principle of the divided mind, see Moss; Liebert; and Cooper.

9. In the introduction to his translation of the *Poetics*, Janko discusses how the *Poetics* responds to the *Republic* (x–xiv).

10. I follow Janko on the nature of catharsis (xvi–xx), which he says "habituates us to feel the correct emotional as well as intellectual responses to . . . people and actions" (xix).

11. Buch describes this moment as a crisis for the arts in general ("Resistance" 244). The cultural images Weiss mentions, though, are drawn from literary sources, specifically the underworld journeys narrated by Virgil, Ovid, and Dante.

12. Howes examines the importance of scenes of taking a position (*Stellungnahme*) in Weiss's writing.

13. Weiss's description of his 1964 visit to Auschwitz, "Meine Ortschaft" ("My Place"), ends, "Dann weiß er, es ist noch nicht zuende" ("Then he knows: it's not yet at an end" [124; 151]). See Adorno, "Meaning" 103.

14. Hell discusses how Weiss elsewhere describes his poetics as shaped by his encounter with these ultimate pictures ("From Laokoon" 25–26).

15. In "The Remorse of the Heart," Sebald suggests that the painting responds to the Holocaust (134; 177).

He too recognizes “die Verhaltenheit der drei Männer und die blinde Indifferenz ihrer . . . Augen” (“the subdued bearing of the three men and the blind indifference of their eyes”), which leads him to connect the image to Rembrandt’s *The Anatomy Lesson*, where the anatomists are looking not at the dead man but at an anatomy book (134; 178; trans. modified).

16. Lindner demonstrates that Weiss’s novel is constantly returning to a consideration of the poetics that undergirds it (156).

17. All translations from *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* are mine.

18. Lindner points out that Weiss’s novel is full of vivid descriptions. He describes Weiss’s vividness as “hallucinatory realism” that “seeks to achieve a dream-analogous authenticity” (151).

19. Scherpe writes that “Peter Weiss’ *Aesthetics of Resistance* wishes to be an indication, a sign of [the] historical work of liberation that has not yet become history” (104).

20. According to Cohen, Weiss sought to unmask the “continuity from the Nazi state to the Federal Republic of the 1960s” (88).

21. Fuchs argues that Sebald’s reading of *The Anatomy Lesson* “makes a connection between European rationalism and the emergence of a biopolitics that made Auschwitz possible” (173). Long sees this biopolitics as an inherent part of modernity and thus reads this section as a broader critique of modernity (135).

22. Littell also compares the dead body of a female partisan whose hanging Aue observes, a sight that deeply disturbs him, with Medusa (*Les Bienveillantes* 171; *Kindly Ones* 179).

23. Sebald clearly recognizes what Laura Levitt has called “a taboo against making connections between ordinary and extraordinary loss” (18).

24. Hell explores how Sebald’s lecture “Air War and Literature” expresses the desire for literature to allow us to see the violence of the past and the simultaneous awareness that this desire opens Sebald up to a charge of voyeurism. She points out that his solution to the problem of describing the bombardment of German cities during the Second World War is to provide an unexplained photograph of dead bodies (“Eyes” 31).

25. For the Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo, the act of both looking at and looking away from the horrors—including a “pile of corpses”—was a way of distancing herself from the experience of the camps that allowed her to survive (273).

26. Sebald’s out-of-focus treatment of the Holocaust calls to mind Didi-Huberman, who describes a set of blurry photographs taken surreptitiously by Auschwitz inmates as a strong example of what he calls the “dual mode” of images: they simultaneously contain “[t]ruth . . . and obscurity” (32).

27. Huyssen connects blurred vision in *Austerlitz* to the indistinct quality of memory, especially traumatic memory, “that one wants to see and not see” (973–74).

28. On Adler’s influence on Sebald, see Finch and Wolff 8–10.

29. Schedel argues that throughout Sebald’s literary works his representations of historical events are characterized by this practice of citation (11).

30. Saleiman highlights Aue’s dual position as a “perpetrator-witness,” both a participant in the Nazis’ crimes and an observer whose distance from what he sees brings him closer to the reader’s position (15).

31. On the influence of the classics on Himmler, see Losemann 23. On Plato and Nazi ideology, see Lacoue-Labarthe 27–29 and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy.

32. Littell’s allusion to Himmler’s speech is further evidence of Kaplan’s point that Holocaust writers and artists respond to the way that the Nazis exploited and thereby tainted certain aesthetic categories, like beauty (2–3).

33. Grethlein shows that Littell explores the potential application of a model of justice derived from the *Oresteia* to the Nazis’ crimes in *The Kindly Ones*. He points out, though, that *The Kindly Ones* also reveals that this model of justice can be misused by Nazi perpetrators and their sympathizers to draw false equivalences intended to exculpate the perpetrators (85–89).

34. LaCapra claims that “the text brings about the complicity of the reader, in effect saying, ‘there-but-for-the-grace-of-a-different-context-go-you’” (“Historical and Literary Approaches” 76).

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theories and  
methodologies

## Introduction to “How We Write Now”

ANGELIKA BAMMER

ANGELIKA BAMMER is an associate professor of interdisciplinary humanities in the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory University. Her coedited volume *The Future of Scholarly Writing: Critical Interventions* (Palgrave Macmillan) and an expanded new edition of her monograph, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (Peter Lang), appeared in 2015, and her study of the transgenerational transmission of history, *Born After: A German Reckoning*, is forthcoming from Bloomsbury Press in 2018. Her next project, a book tentatively titled “Not Reconciled: The Wounds of History and the Work of Memory,” explores the concept of memory work in relation to collective memory.

HOW WE READ (CLOSELY, DISTANTLY, SYMPTOMATICALLY, AGAINST THE GRAIN, OR ON THE SURFACE) HAS BEEN VIGOROUSLY DEBATED, AND *PMLA* has helped foster the debate. Distant reading as defined by Franco Moretti is the focus of a recent Theories and Methodologies feature in *PMLA*, and two forthcoming issues will address “cultures of reading.”<sup>1</sup> Whether we define ourselves as English teachers, public intellectuals in the humanities, or literary or cultural studies scholars, this newly energized attention to how we read reminds us that the critical practice of reading is foundational to our work. No matter what else we do (collect interviews, analyze films, pursue ethnographic fieldwork), attentive reading is our primary method of analysis and assessment. How we do it and to what ends warrant thoughtful discussion.

How we write has garnered considerably less attention. Yet it is arguably of no less importance. This *PMLA* feature on writing in the humanities in the twenty-first century addresses—and begins to redress—the resulting imbalance in public discussions about how we do our work.

When I proposed this topic, my premise was that writing is as fundamental to our work as reading—by some measures even more so. Conventionally, writing has been, and into the foreseeable future will continue to be, the primary means of humanistic knowledge production. However, while we convey what we know and think through writing, it is not simply a vehicle for *delivering* knowledge. It is a way of *acquiring* knowledge. Through writing, we figure things out, including what we think and what something means. Writing is a form of analysis, a method of interpretation, and a mode of thinking. In this light, a critical inquiry into the state of writing in contemporary higher education is not just timely and relevant; it is overdue.

In a sporadic and disaggregated way, this inquiry has already started. Several recent studies have addressed the state of academic writing from a range of perspectives, including how and why academics “learn to write badly” (Billig), how to write elegantly and why style matters (Sword), why clarity and accessibility are not necessar-

ily virtues (Culler and Lamb), how to write “otherwise” (Stacey and Wolff), and what the future of scholarly writing might look like (Bammer and Boetcher Joeres). Special issues of *Critical Inquiry* (*Comics and Media*, Spring 2014) and *Representations* (*Description across the Disciplines*, Summer 2016) have expanded the discussion by moving the exploration of scholarly forms and their heuristic potential beyond textual to visual and hybrid forms and beyond the humanities to the social and natural sciences.

To move an emergent discussion forward, “How We Write Now” builds on the work initiated by these previous studies. Our focus here is the state of writing as it is practiced and produced within the institutional framework of the twenty-first-century (North American) academy. However, the stakes, I believe, go beyond writing. Collectively, the pieces assembled in this special feature direct attention to one of the most consequential, yet largely undertheorized and unexplored, aspects of work in the contemporary humanities: the forms in which we conduct and present our scholarship. Perhaps a day will come when, instead of only asking one another (if and when we ask at all), “What are you writing?” we will ask, with the same degree of interest, “How are you writing it?”

These are challenging times for academics in the humanities. Given the dismal job market, steady decrease in the percentage of students majoring in the humanities, and shrinking number of foreign language and literature departments, the state of academic writing might not appear to be an urgent issue. Yet it is affected by—and might potentially affect—these other structural considerations. A number of converging factors have put pressure on the ways we write: the continuing exploration of interdisciplinary modes of inquiry, the emergence of new-media technologies and cultural regimes of communication, the diversion of resources away from the humanities, and the increasing urgency

of engaged public scholarship. These same pressures, however, also present opportunities that challenge us to be purposeful about how we conduct our scholarship and urge us to reexamine the norms and conventions that have defined our work. At the same time, they invite us to explore alternatives: to innovate, experiment, and test the possibilities, at once communicative and epistemological, of new forms of inquiry and representation. This invitation to think expansively and creatively, to probe the potential of established forms at the same time we explore alternatives, is based on the assumption that humanistic scholarship could increase its impact if we were more intentional about the forms that shape our work.

To someone under pressure to publish, thinking about or experimenting with form (Which voice will I use? Should I include images? Can I tell a story?) might seem a rather low priority. When writing becomes production, and production is measured in terms of quantity (How much can I produce and how quickly can I deliver?), aesthetics and pleasure can seem irrelevant, even encumbering, like excess baggage on a raft in high seas. I have heard graduate students angrily counter appeals to write more aesthetically pleasing prose by saying, “It’s fine for *you* to talk about the art of scholarly writing! We have to first get a job. Then we have to get tenure. If it’s not too late, we can think about pleasure and the aesthetics of form then.”

I believe that questions of form are foundational to our work as academics, public intellectuals, and scholarly writers. Questions like Whom am I writing to? Whom am I writing for? Whom am I writing as? What do I want my writing to do? What is my writing doing to me? cannot be relegated to the privileged preserve of tenured academics speaking to other academics. They are critical to our well-being, if not survival, as engaged thinkers with knowledge and ideas to impart that we believe are meaningful and as intellectuals committed to the work of the humanities.

How we write matters. The power and effectiveness of our work hang in the balance.

In the mid-1970s Roland Barthes considered the dilemma intellectuals face when the expression of ideas is regulated through the marketplace. The problem, he proposes, is not the ideas. "The pleasure of writing, of producing," he observes, is evident "on all sides." The problem is the production context. "The circuit being commercial," he explains, "free production remains clogged, hysterical, and somehow bewildered; most of the time, the texts and the performances proceed where there is no demand for them." In such a context, he concludes, the pleasure and power we could derive from writing if we could freely choose what and how to write are thwarted, and the utopian potential of writing predicated on the vision of "a free society (in which pleasure would circulate without the intermediary of money) . . . reverts . . . to the apocalypse" (81).

### Between Utopia and Apocalypse

Four decades later, where are we now in relation to writing? Is the process of production still, as Barthes described it, "clogged, hysterical, and somehow bewildered"? Are we still, "most of the time," writing texts for which "there is no demand"? Or have we moved forward and reached a point where "the pleasure of writing, of producing" can circulate more freely and be more fully felt?

The negative case is relatively easy to make (and has been made extensively in recent times). As production demands in the corporate university increase, those of us employed (or hoping to be) in academic jobs are expected to publish more and at a quicker pace, even though there are still only twenty-four hours in a day. The administrative sleight of hand that recasts writing as "content delivery," effectively turning us into content-delivery people, just makes matters worse. It tries to hide the fact that we don't have more time to write than academics used to have. Many of us

have much less time. The compression of the job market and the resulting adjunctification of the academic work force means that more and more of us are teaching more and more courses, often at more than one institution at once, and without the vital, existential protection of benefits. If we get sick, have dependents to take care of, or lose one of our jobs, the apocalypse that Roland Barthes gestured toward no longer feels much like a metaphor.

Some of these problems are specific to our time. Others are long-standing. The disabling effect of economic, social, and cultural inequalities and their intersections is still measurable. As Gina Hiatt, a psychologist who has worked for years as a writing coach for academics, notes in her contribution to our feature, it's easier to meet the production demands of the contemporary university if you don't "belong to a marginalized race or group."

In the aggregate, problems like the ones outlined above have led to claims of a writing crisis. College teachers lament that students can't write anymore. Popular media mock our writing as arcane nonsense, while for many untenured faculty and, increasingly, even graduate students, the need to write and publish evokes feelings close to dread.

Yet claims that we face a writing crisis notwithstanding, one could argue that the generative side of academic writing is gaining strength. Inter- and multidisciplinary work is encouraged, public scholarship is applauded, and creativity (we are told) is valued.<sup>2</sup> One factor, both cause and effect, in these developments is a significant rethinking of the audience that we envision or aspire to create for our work as scholars and intellectuals. As public scholars or as participants in inter- and multidisciplinary projects, we invariably extend ourselves beyond the circle of discipline-based peers, with whom we share a specialized language and knowledge base, to engage a wider audience and different publics. Our choices of form and medium are crucial to this process.

At the same time, the boundary-crossing nature of inter- and multidisciplinary work calls for new, sometimes hybrid, forms adequate to the particular mix of disciplines involved in a project. Instead of relying on established methods of inquiry and protocols of presentation within the conventions of a discipline, we have to reconfigure the methods of inquiry and protocols of presentation.

This need to think expansively and creatively about the forms in which we conduct and present our scholarship is encouraged by an ever-expanding range of options in the contemporary media landscape. The proliferation of genres, modes, forms, new media, and a panoply of hybrid forms continues apace, enabling—indeed inviting—us to experiment. The inclusion of visual components (from emojis and other images to graphic design) in public communication has made us more conscious of the visual dimensions of text production, while the expansion of online publishing venues has made the inclusion of images in texts an increasingly standard practice. (“You have to have images,” my undergraduate students earnestly explain to me. “It’s how people think.”)

Meanwhile, social media continue to transform how we write and read, perhaps even how we think. *Twitter* has provided a forum for writing in short bursts that writers and thinkers are beginning to explore as a generative medium. Writers like Jennifer Egan and Teju Cole have already demonstrated its potential as a form for fiction and nonfiction writing.<sup>3</sup> The ethnographers Alaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki have used the dialogue form of an extended e-mail exchange to reflect on the work of ethnography as it is practiced and experienced in fieldwork. *Facebook* posts provide the structural framework and presentation mode of Jeff Nunokawa’s hybrid work of literary criticism, personal meditation, and cultural theory, while the comic book form has already been recognized as a legitimate form of scholarly presentation.

If Joe Sacco’s *Palestine*, with its introduction by Edward Said, marked a beginning in this regard, the publication of Nick Sousanis’s *Unflattening* by Harvard University Press gave it the academic seal of approval.<sup>4</sup>

### Scenes of Writing

A few years ago I designed a graduate seminar on the art of scholarly writing to explore the state of writing in the contemporary humanities. Starting with the norms and conventions established by our respective disciplines (how we are taught and expected to write) and moving toward some of the alternatives that we might envision (how we would like to write), we mapped a range of possibilities.

I began by giving the students photographs of what I called “scenes of writing.” They were a set of large, black-and-white portraits by the photographer Jill Krementz.<sup>5</sup> Each showed a writer writing in an intimate and evocative scene, inviting us into the privacy of the writer’s space. Toni Morrison sits on her couch, revising text in a notebook. A myopic Katherine Anne Porter peers at a manuscript on her cluttered desk. Veronica Chambers perches on her kitchen counter, tapping on the computer balanced on her lap. George Plimpton focuses on the page in front of him, undeterred by the twin babies squirming at his feet, while Kurt Vonnegut, in a bathrobe and barefoot, is doing crossword puzzles, unfinished writing scattered in sheets on his desk and floor.

“Which of these scenes of writing do you identify with?” I asked the students, as they passed the photographs around. “Which one most represents you?”

“The me I am or the me I would like to be?” one of them asked.

“Either one,” I said. “It’s the space between real and ideal that our course will measure.”

As they picked their images, they started to talk about the conditions under which they wrote: the time they had or didn’t have,

the places they found conducive to writing, their writing rituals, the distractions that made writing discipline difficult. Shame and anxiety often surfaced as they talked about their writing, the problems they faced, and what they wished they could change. When they envisioned an ideal—perfect conditions when confident writing would just pour out—the one image they invariably pointed to was that of E. B. White. Alone at his typewriter, in an uncluttered room at an uncluttered

desk, a calm expanse of water and cloudless sky visible through an open window, he is absorbed in his work, both hands on the typewriter keys, his gaze focused on the page he is typing. "If my life were like that . . .," the students exclaimed wistfully, imagining how, with a life "like that," they might write (fig. 1).

We proceeded from there to explore the state of academic writing as we knew it and as we wished it to be. Our experience as teachers, mentors, colleagues, and writers ourselves provided the material we drew on. The cases we studied included the following:

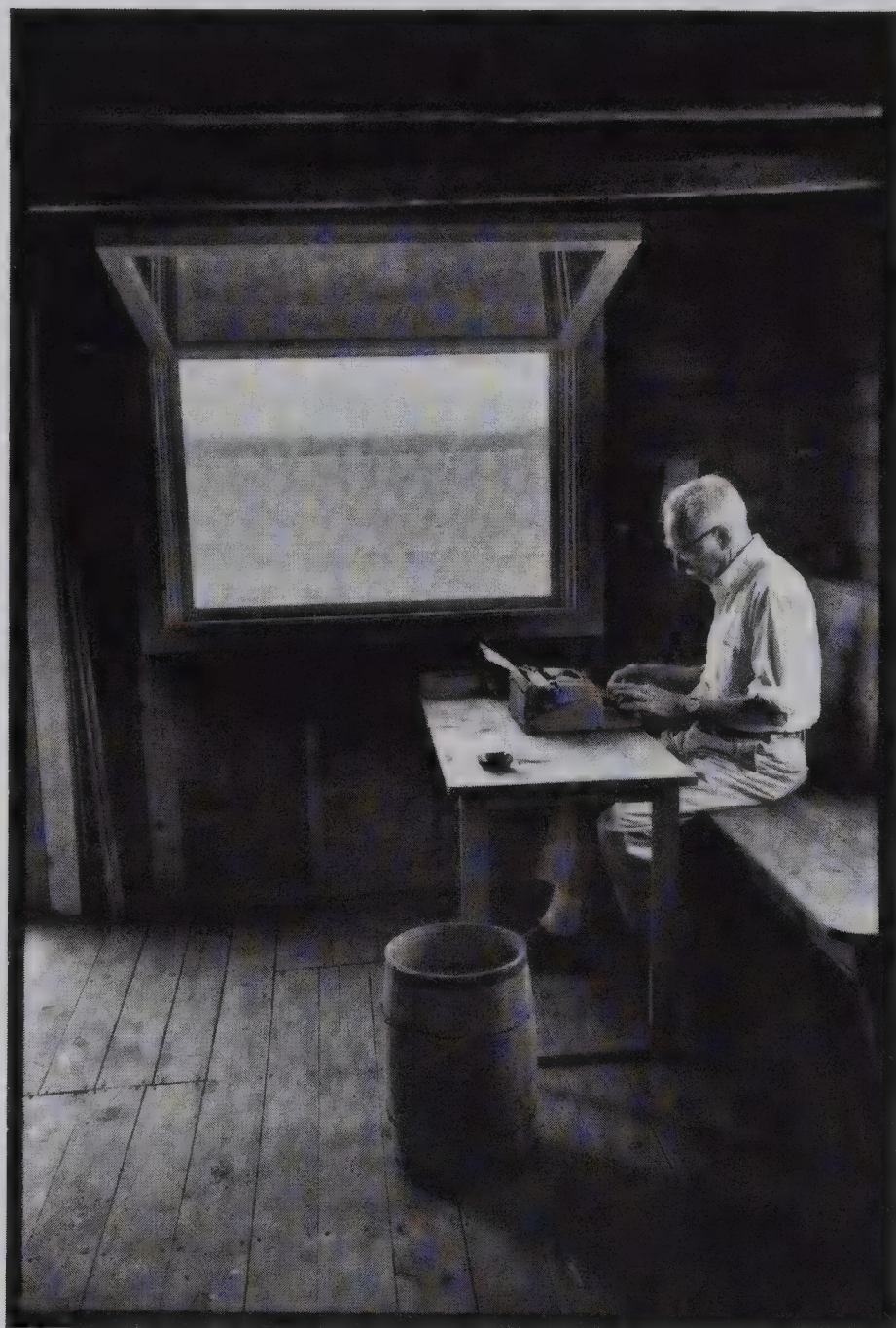
Case 1: She is a first-year college student, and her first writing assignment is an argument essay. She feels confident. She knows how to do this. She learned and practiced the five-paragraph essay in high school and usually got As on her writing assignments. She repeats the formula that she learned in high school and gets an A on her college paper. But when asked to explain what she thinks in her own words, she can't do it. She wishes that she could explore her thoughts in other ways and write differently. The formula gets in the way of thinking.

Case 2: He is a graduate student in comparative literature and has things to say, but they aren't in fashion. Neither the theoretical framework nor the political assumptions that shape his thinking are shared by his graduate school cohort, and he wants to be part of the group. He bends his thinking to the group's approval but loses a sense of his own thoughts along the way (fig. 2).<sup>6</sup>

Case 3: She is on the tenure track at a major research university and is writing what she thinks of

FIG. 1

E. B. White, photographed by Jill Krementz on 18 August 1976 in his boathouse in North Brooklin, Maine. All rights reserved.



AUGUST 18, 1976

Jill Krementz

as her tenure book. “Trying to write” is how she usually puts it, and she calls it her “project,” not her “book.” (*Book*, she fears, sounds too presumptuous.) It isn’t going well, at least not according to the timetable that she has set herself. Even in her sleep, she hears the tenure clock ticking. But it’s the other clock, also ticking, that most worries her. She is in her thirties and wants to get pregnant, but she has been advised to wait. Once you have tenure, they tell her, you can start a family. But what if it’s too late by then, she worries. And if she doesn’t get tenure, what then? The asynchronous ticking clocks make it hard to focus.

Case 4: They are both graduate students at a large state university. She is in women’s, gender, and sexuality studies; he is in history. He is not a native speaker of English, and she is the first in her family to go to college. They are both struggling to find their way in formal English. They are multilingual, but their other language is considered a deficiency, not an enhancement, a problem to be fixed, not an asset that makes their writing richer. They work to press their thoughts into the standard forms of written English, but in so doing they often lose track of what they actually want to say.

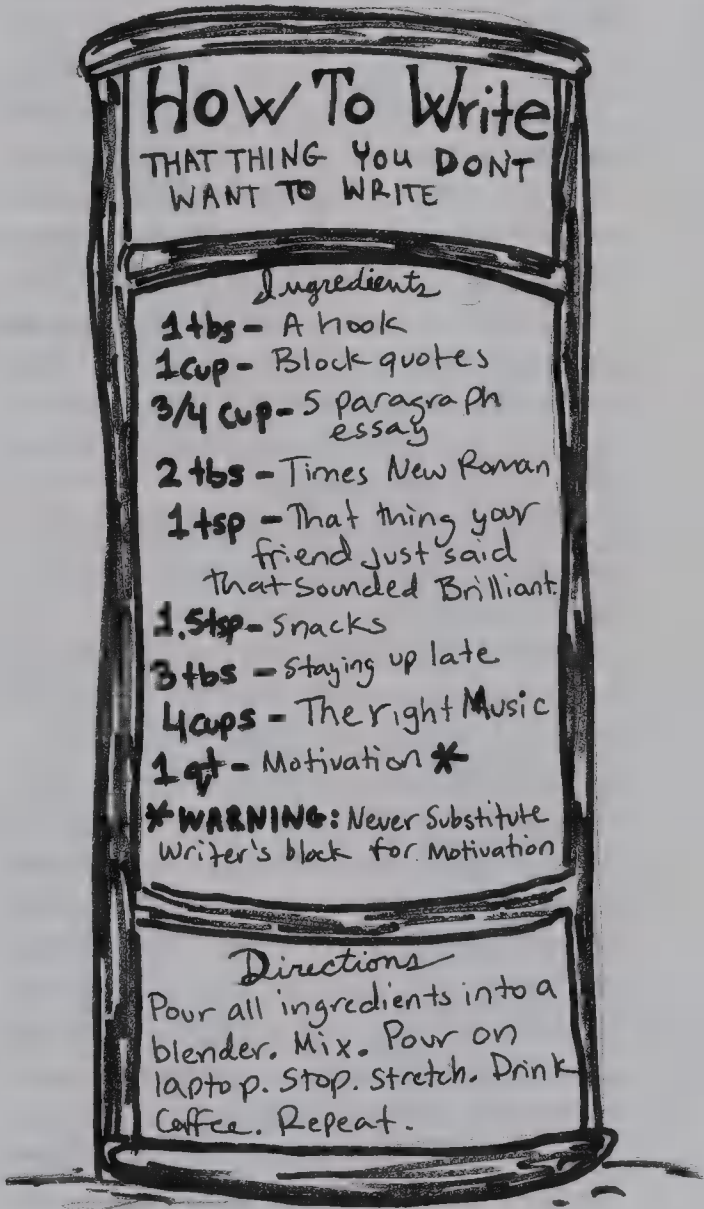
Case 5: She has a PhD in English and is hoping to get a tenure-track job. For now, she is working as an adjunct. She teaches literature and she also writes it. When she teaches poetry, her work as a poet informs the way that she teaches students to read. When she does scholarly work, the rhythms of poetry inform her writing. Yet she fears that the poetic tone doesn’t sound sufficiently scholarly and tries to compensate by covering it up with theory.

Case 6: He is writing a dissertation on scenes of labor in southern literature and wants to ground it in his own working-class experience. His commitment to the people in the community that he grew up in informs his work. Yet he fears that including their perspectives, much less voices, in his dissertation will sound too personal, not sufficiently

scholarly. He tries to disguise their presence by reducing them to footnotes.

Over the course of the semester the issues we explored ranged from the conditions under which we wrote and the forms in which we shaped our writing to what we wanted our writing to do and what it did to us. We debated whether the norms and conventions of our respective disciplines (the formulas that our first-year students, fresh out of high school, tend to rely on) helped or hindered our writing. Could the personal and the scholarly mix? Could we be “creative” without detracting from the “critical,” or, as Naomi Scheman put it, could we still (or again) imagine a time when “the gentlemen (and some

FIG. 2  
Untitled drawing  
by Tesla Cariani,  
Atlanta, 2016.



gentlewomen) who . . . wrote critical, scholarly essays and books . . . were thought of as writers as well as authors" (41)? Would we *like* to be both writers and authors? And how would such aspirations affect the work that we do as scholars? Would "author" and "writer" remain separate personae or could they merge into a creative-critical hybrid? We discussed whom we felt accountable to in our writing—how to honor, not betray, those we wrote about. How not to appropriate, how to pay back. We agreed that writing, whether scholarly or creative, was a form of action. It had effects in the world. What would it mean to write responsibly? What forms might such writing take? We worried about teaching writing. How could you teach someone to write well? What were the criteria and what was the goal?

We wondered, Who decided these things? Who were the arbiters of worth? Who decided what made scholarship and writing "good"? What role did the traditional community of peers play in this determination? Should the larger community of people with a stake in our work have a say? What rights did we—writers, authors, and scholars—have over our "product"? How did the institutions that paid our salaries and provided our benefits influence our writing?

The pieces that follow echo some of these questions. The contributors work in institutions ranging from private and public high schools to an art institute to small private and large state universities. They are at different stages of their careers. Those with academic positions include an adjunct professor, a visiting assistant professor, an associate professor, and a few professors holding named chairs at major research universities. Several contributors are graduate students on or approaching the job market, and one is a self-employed academic writing coach with her own online consulting business. They represent a range of fields and perspectives across the humanities. Most work in some capacity with questions of language and literature (mainly, but not ex-

clusively, in English), but their work extends into fields like history, anthropology, religion, comic studies, art history, and art practice. For some, writing is the primary subject of their research and teaching. For others, it is the medium. For a few, writing is one among several media that they use in their work.

Each piece speaks for itself. I will merely note how this collection of essays begins and ends. In the first piece, Michael Bérubé discusses a recent, controversial case of peer review; after exploring the broad challenges facing scholarly work in the hypermediated culture of twenty-first-century democracies, he mounts a defense of scholarly expertise. But on reflection, readers will find that the stakes in his piece are much higher. They are about the uncertain state of democracy in our time: who we think counts and in whom we vest authority and on what grounds.

The last piece, by four young scholars from different fields, all graduate students at Emory University at the time of writing, picks up a theme explored in several of the other pieces (most notably in those by Anne Ruggles Gere, Terri Kapsalis, and the four high school teachers—Kevin English, Lisa Eddy, Beth Schaum, and Sarah Andrew-Vaughn): what writing means to students and what writing for a sustainable future might look like. These students, Tesla Cariani, Ashley Coleman Taylor, Christopher Lirette, and Marlo Starr, have no illusions about the problems facing the humanities and the ways that academic institutions, often with less than good faith, try to finesse the bottom line, using people as pawns in the process. But this is the career they have chosen, and they explain, with clarity and passion, what they cherish in the scholarly life and what it gives them as intellectuals, scholars, and teachers. They make a powerful case for ways of writing that resist instrumentalization. Refusing to become instruments in the service of a corporate university, they insist on the need—indeed, the right—to live, work, write, and think as hu-

man beings, as embodied persons with lives, histories, and commitments to the communities that shaped and sustain them.

I hope that the issues that our feature raises and the way that we present them will spark a broader conversation about the challenges and opportunities for writing in the humanities in the twenty-first century. I am pleased to see *PMLA* take the lead in this conversation. I look forward to seeing where it takes us.

NOTES

The fundamentally collaborative nature of writing in the humanities is belied by the very terms we use, such as “monograph” and “single-authored,” that ignore the input of others who contributed to the work, on the levels of both form and content. They remain invisible and unnamed, while we alone get the credit. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those whose queries, insights, and suggestions helped shape this piece.

1. Franco Moretti’s concept (and practice) of distant reading was explored in the May 2017 issue of *PMLA*. Cultures of reading will be the focus of the October 2018 and January 2019 issues.

2. Tepper has been a leading proponent of the importance of creativity as a generative, even transformative, force in higher education (e.g., Tepper; Lingo and Tepper).

3. Egan’s short story “Black Box,” which she described as “a series of terse mental dispatches from an undercover spy of the future” (“Coming Soon”), was published one tweet at a time (one tweet every minute) on *The New Yorker* Web site before appearing in full in the print magazine. Cole’s short story “Hafiz” appeared in the form of thirty-one retweets by thirty-one contributors. His essay “A Piece of the Wall,” which he described as a “serious longform investigative piece” (Calvin), was published on *Twitter* and is considered the first of its kind.

4. The 2015 publication of Sousanis’s comic book *Unflattening* and Nunokawa’s Facebook-based *Note Book* (Princeton UP) make that year the annus mirabilis of popular media as scholarly form.

5. The photographs I use in class are taken from the calendar based on Krementz’s book *The Writer’s Desk* and published under the same name by Pomegranate Press in 1997.

6. On the dynamics and costs of thought conformity in the contemporary humanities, see Ruddick.

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theories and  
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## The Way We Review Now

MICHAEL BÉRUBÉ

THE REBECCA TUVEL CONTROVERSY MAY NOT SEEM LIKE AN EXAMPLE OF THE WAY WE WRITE NOW. MY PURPOSE IN THIS ESSAY IS TO CONVINCE you that it is.

The facts of the case are well established. In late March 2017, *Hypatia* published Tuvel's essay "In Defense of Transracialism." In the ensuing weeks, the essay drew such heated criticism, much of it generated through social media, that the controversy spilled out of the higher-ed press and philosophy blogs and into nonacademic publications such as the liberal magazine *New York* (Singal) and the conservative *Weekly Standard* (Scrapbook). The first online objection came in the form of an open letter to *Hypatia* that called for the article to be retracted ("Open Letter"). That letter quickly garnered hundreds of signatures, though these have since been taken down. As the controversy grew, fueled by defenders of Tuvel such as Justin Weinberg at the philosophy blog *Daily Nous* and the always voluble Brian Leiter at *Leiter Reports*, a self-described majority of the associate editors of *Hypatia* issued—on *Facebook*, not in the pages of *Hypatia*—an "apology" for the article's publication that repudiated not only the article but also the review process that approved the article for publication:

It is our position that the harms that have ensued from the publication of this article could and should have been prevented by a more effective review process. We are deeply troubled by this and are taking this opportunity to seriously reconsider our review policies and practices. While nothing can change the fact that the article was published, we are dedicated to doing what we can to make things right. Clearly, the article should not have been published, and we believe that the fault for this lies in the review process. In addition to the harms . . . imposed upon trans people and people of color, publishing the article risked exposing its author to heated critique that was both predictable and justifiable. A better review process would have both anticipated the criticisms that quickly followed the publication, and required that revisions be made to improve the argument in light of those criticisms.<sup>1</sup>

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Much of the immediate discussion of this controversy focused on the claim, made first in the open letter and then echoed in the apology, that Tuvel's article did "harm" to the communities under discussion, trans activists and people of color. This charge was, to my mind, decisively rebutted by José Luis Bermúdez, who, writing in *Inside Higher Ed*, not only argued that the claimants did not specify what they meant by "harm" but also pointed out, sensibly enough, that the person most harmed by the controversy was Tuvel herself. Instead of engaging with this aspect of the debate, important as it is, I want to focus on the critiques of *Hypatia's* peer-review process, because I think they hold the key to the way we write now.<sup>2</sup>

One of the authors of the open letter, Shannon Winnubst, defended the critique of Tuvel's essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, suggesting that the controversy broke down along gender lines ("the overwhelmingly sexist, male, and white discipline has, once again, called out the feminists as irrational, hysterical, and immoral") and arguing that Tuvel's scholarship is substandard because it "does not engage with the scholarship in trans theory in ways that *Hypatia's* editorial mission demands." The first of these charges is deflection at best, as if Tuvel's supporters (many of whom identified as feminists) could be dismissed en masse simply because Leiter was prominent among them; but it is the second that warrants my attention here. What, precisely, are the ways in which *Hypatia's* editorial mission demands engagement with the scholarship in trans theory? And did Tuvel really fail to observe these?

The key to understanding one aspect of the controversy, I suggest, lies not in Tuvel's failure to engage in debate over trans theory but in the way she did engage. In the relevant part of her essay, Tuvel writes:

In her argument defending the moral permissibility of transgenderism but not of trans-

racialism, Cressida Heyes . . . suggests that arguments in defense of transracialism, like that of Christine Overall, discount the fact that society's dominant belief structure limits the available resources one has to claim different forms of identification. As Heyes puts it, "beliefs about the kind of thing race is shape the possibilities for race change. In particular, . . . the belief that an individual's racial identity derives from her biological ancestors undermines the possibility of changing race, in ways that contrast with sex-gender." According to Heyes, because sex-gender has been understood to be a "property of the individual's body," the possibility of changing one's sex-gender through bodily modification is acceptable in our society. However, because race has been understood to be a matter of "both the body and ancestry," one cannot alter one's body to become a different race.

The problem with this argument is that it dangerously appears to limit to the status quo the possibilities for changing one's membership in an identity category. Indeed, American society has not always granted recognition to those who felt their gender did not align with their sexed bodies. Would Heyes's argument imply that, during this time, a person born with male genitalia, but who identified as a woman, would not be permitted to affirm her self-identity, because the available social resources were not yet in place? Or, imagine a transgender person born in a country today where such forms of identification are not tolerated, because the understanding of sex-gender identity is firmly restricted to the genitalia one possesses at birth. Would that person be justly forced to renounce her felt sex-gender, because she was born into a society where "beliefs about the kind of thing [sex-gender] is shape the possibilities for [sex-gender] change"? The implications of such a position for the normative question of whether one should be allowed to change race are more radical than Heyes might appreciate. Indeed, if we hold the legitimacy of a particular act hostage to the status quo, or to what Heyes calls the "range of actually available possibilities for sustaining and transforming oneself," it is difficult to see how we can make

any social progress at all. Accordingly, to say “this is how racial categorization currently operates in our society” is to provide a very poor reason to the person asking how racial categorization should operate. And this type of reason is even more disappointing when it comes alongside Heyes’s acknowledgment that “the actions of individuals, now and in the future, will be constitutive of new norms of racial and gendered identity.” (269)

This looks to me very much like a direct engagement with the scholarship on the issue, an engagement in which Tuvel carefully critiques the work of Cressida Heyes. So I find it especially revealing, with regard to the way we write now, that the person who posted the associate editors’ apology to *Facebook*—on behalf of a majority of the journal’s associate editors—was Heyes herself.

This, it seems to me, heralds a whole new approach to peer review. As Claire Colebrook rightly notes, “A retraction would be heavy-duty, but it would be an amazingly revolutionary gesture in philosophy. . . . Times are different. Things do change. It would be remarkable. It would be unheard of. But maybe that’s OK” (qtd. in McKenzie et al.). A retraction of a peer-reviewed article, made not on the basis of ordinary protocols of peer review (i.e., on a finding of plagiarism or fraud) but in response to online open letters and *Facebook* posts, would indeed be revolutionary. It might well point the way toward a broader cultural revolution in which scholars who find their work stringently critiqued in refereed journals, in articles vetted by ordinary protocols of peer review, do not have to go to the trouble of submitting critical responses to be adjudicated by those vetting processes. Rather, if their outrage is urgent, and their sense of speaking for vulnerable communities (who are in imminent danger of being harmed by the article) is sufficiently strong, they can take to social media to demand retractions and issue apologies. This strategy apparently can be deployed even if the outraged scholar

in question is a member of the journal’s associate editorial board; in fact, rather than disclose an obvious conflict of interest, he or she might well take the opportunity to speak for a plurality or majority of the board.

Beyond the immediate context of *Hypatia* and other scholarly journals, however, the truly revolutionary aspect of retraction by social-media petition is that it is available to anyone, thereby challenging the monopoly that scholars have long held over the system of scholarly communication. To be sure, Tuvel’s critics appealed to a criterion of scholarly expertise that, they alleged, Tuvel’s essay did not meet; but one can easily imagine a group of people outside an area of disciplinary expertise deciding that an academic publication observes the norms of scholarship in the field but does unacceptable (if unspecified) harm nonetheless. In other words, for now the petitioners might be (as they are in the Tuvel case) scholars serving as self-designated representatives of transgender constituencies and people of color; tomorrow they might well be students, parents, alumni, trustees, donors, journalists, and legislators who take exception to arguments with which they strongly disagree. The revolutionary potential for extrascholarly review is as limitless as the Internet itself.

As I write, however, the broader cultural revolution appears to be on hold. In July 2017, Sally Scholz, *Hypatia*’s editor, and Shelley Wilcox, the editor of *Hypatia Reviews Online*, resigned from their positions in response to the Tuvel controversy, and the journal’s board of directors (Elizabeth Anderson, Leslie Francis, Heidi Grasswick, Lisa Tessman [chair], and Miriam Solomon [president]), temporarily suspended the authority of the associate editorial board. The board of directors, announcing the resignations and the suspension, issued the following statement on the journal’s Web site:

It is with disappointment and regret that the Board of Directors of *Hypatia* has received

the news that Sally Scholz and Shelley Wilcox are resigning from their roles as editors of *Hypatia*. Throughout their tenure with the journal, they have stood by fundamental principles of publication ethics, which call upon all who are involved in the governance of a journal to respect the integrity of the peer-review process and to support authors published by the journal (with rare exceptions such as plagiarism and fraud). The Board is also committed to these principles and fully supports Scholz and Wilcox in their commitment to and execution of them.

Unfortunately, the Associate Editors' public apology for the publication of an article failed to respect these principles. Their action, appearing to speak for the journal rather than as individuals, invited confusion over who speaks for *Hypatia*. It also damaged the reputations of both the journal and its Editors, Scholz and Wilcox, and has made it impossible for the Editors to maintain the public credibility and trust that peer reviewed academic journal editorship requires. (Solomon et al.)

For the foreseeable future, then, at *Hypatia* and elsewhere, the system of professional peer review will remain intact. But to me the astonishing thing—the revolutionary thing, if you will—is that any serious scholar believed that using social media to demand a retraction of, or issue an apology for, a published article (and to explicitly impugn the peer-review process that approved it for publication) was a legitimate thing to do.

My position might sound like a traditionalist defense of peer review. That's because it's exactly what it is. But, more than that, it is an argument that peer review itself constitutes the real revolution in scholarly communication, the one that gave scholars autonomous intellectual authority over the means of production in their fields. To be sure, traditional forms of peer review are not without their problems (about which more in a moment); but it should be obvious by now that a system of scholarly communication that works by way of evaluations undertaken by one's fellow

scholars is more conducive to a free and open exchange of ideas than a system of scholarly communication overseen by the administrators of one's university—or by its trustees, or even by extra-academic constituencies such as alumni, donors, members of the clergy, or legislators. There was a time when an esteemed sociologist at Stanford University (Edward Ross) could be fired because Leland Stanford's wife disapproved of his work. That is one reason the American Association of University Professors was founded; it is also one reason to defend the intellectual autonomy provided by the system of scholarly peer review.

I say this as someone who has long argued that scholarly work undertaken outside the system of peer review can be a valuable part of a scholar's intellectual portfolio and (under some circumstances) can even be part of a scholar's tenure and promotion dossier.<sup>3</sup> I maintained that position through the advent of blogging (while acknowledging that a scholar's blog usually has a one-hundred-percent acceptance rate for that scholar's work) and *Facebook*, on the grounds that these forms of media, like newspapers and magazines, can be vehicles for important scholarly exchanges that can be assessed post hoc on their merits. It came as no surprise to me, therefore, that over the past ten or fifteen years, some younger scholars submitted work from unrefereed online publications as part of their scholarly dossier and that long-term social-media projects like Jeff Nunokawa's daily essays on *Facebook* could find an academic publisher (Princeton University Press) willing to incorporate them into the system of peer review (in the form of a book titled *Note Book*). I once tried to draw the line at *Twitter*, only to find that even that debased medium can be used productively (especially during conferences) to support more-substantial venues of scholarly exchange and (sometimes less productively) by digital humanities scholars practicing a kind of social-media performance art. The lesson of the past

decade and a half seems clear. There is no question that social media has transformed the way we write now, establishing complex and sometimes contradictory relations with more traditional, professional modes of scholarly communication. The question is whether social media will become a venue for undermining traditional, professional modes of scholarly communication, as the Tuvel case threatened to do.

In the humanities, Kathleen Fitzpatrick has been perhaps the most daring and visionary critic of traditional, “closed” forms of peer review, in which referees serve as prepublication gatekeepers. Her 2011 book, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*, offers a thoughtful alternative to the standard gatekeeping model, as well as a trenchant critique of the systemic abuses permitted by the system of anonymous peer review. *Planned Obsolescence* argues for a radically new form of peer review, mediated by new media, in which reviews are conducted postpublication in open, transparent, and carefully moderated formats somewhat like those of *Wikipedia*. Fitzpatrick writes:

[T]he time has come for us to consider whether, really, we might all be better served by separating the question of credentialing from the publishing process, by allowing everything through the gate, and by designing a post-publication peer review process that focuses on how a scholarly text should be received rather than whether it should be out there in the first place. What if peer review learned from social software systems such as Slashdot and Digg, and became peer-to-peer review? (32)

The result, Fitzpatrick rightly suggests, would be a system of meta-evaluation: “the key activity of such a peer-to-peer review system must be not the review of texts, but the review of the reviewers” (37).

Lest the review-of-reviewers process degenerate into an endless, bickering comment

thread or an echo chamber, Fitzpatrick recommends that it be tended and curated:

It seems self-evident: the more open such systems are, the more debate they foster, and the more communal value is placed on participating in them, the better the material they produce can be. However, all of these aspects of the community must be carefully nurtured in order for it to avoid turning into what Cass Sunstein describes, in *Infotopia*, as a deliberative cocoon, in which small groups of the like-minded reinforce one another’s biases and produce unspoken social pressures toward conformity with what appears to be majority opinion, resulting in a mode of “group-think” that propagates errors rather than correcting them. (42)

Fitzpatrick justly won acclaim for practicing what her book proposes: she published a draft of it in 2009 at *MediaCommons*, inviting open review. In this case, the print book, vetted by traditional peer review, was published by New York University Press two years later. The open-source review process seems to have been successful—and, for those who might still be doubtful about its prospects, the approval of the manuscript by the press’s standard reviewing mechanisms should put to rest any concerns about the scholarly merit of the project (as, indeed, should any reasonable reading of the book itself).

And yet the Tuvel case arguably calls some of Fitzpatrick’s assumptions into question. For one thing, it challenges Fitzpatrick’s critique of reviewer anonymity, for anonymity shielded *Hypatia*’s referees from a full-scale mobbing. More important, perhaps, is Fitzpatrick’s claim that an open review process will produce useful assessments of a scholar’s place in a field: “A system of peer-to-peer review won’t give us an easy binary criterion for determining ‘value’—but then, if we’re honest, it never has. It will, however, give us invaluable information about how a scholar is situated within her field, how her work has been

received and used by her peers, and what kind of effect she is having on her field's future" (48). One can argue that the campaign against Tuvel's essay revealed potentially toxic tensions between the world of social media and the world of scholarly communication. In social media, what is known as "callout culture" and "ally theater" (in which people demonstrate their bona fides as allies of a vulnerable population) often produces a swell of online outrage that demands that a post or a tweet be taken down or deleted. In the world of scholarly communication, articles are retracted (the scholarly equivalent of being taken down or deleted?) only in cases of plagiarism or fraud. Alternatively, one could counterargue that the Tuvel controversy itself served as a form of open-source review, in which the backlash against the open letter and the apology—much of it occurring on philosophy blogs—wound up reinforcing a general sense that peer review should not be circumvented by such means. It is possible, therefore, to believe that in the Tuvel case social media was part of the problem *and* part of the solution.

But one thing does seem incontrovertible: the controversy gave us invaluable information about how scholars are situated within their fields, how their work has been received and used by their peers, and what kind of effect they are having on their field's future. That information came at a high price for Tuvel. Nor will *Hypatia*'s reputation soon recover from the debacle, and that is a grievous loss to anyone invested in the status of feminist philosophy in an oppressively male-dominated field. Meanwhile, traditional forms of peer review will live to see another day. But the very possibility that they can be challenged if not undermined by Internet campaigns should serve as a warning and a reminder: in academe, professional, peer-reviewed forms of disagreement are worth preserving, all the more so when they involve protocols of scholarly communication that, like so many artifacts of literate civilization,

are far more valuable—and fragile—than most people realize.

## NOTES

1. The associate editors' apology was posted on *Facebook* on 1 May 2017 ([www.facebook.com/cressida.heyess/posts/10154548425035895](http://www.facebook.com/cressida.heyess/posts/10154548425035895)) and then, after it was removed from *Facebook*, it was reposted on *Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog*, on 5 May 2017 ([leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/thought-crimes-watch-comparing-trans-racialism-to-transgenderism-verboten.html](http://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/05/thought-crimes-watch-comparing-trans-racialism-to-transgenderism-verboten.html)).

2. My own response to Tuvel's article is irrelevant to my argument about peer review, but just for the record, had the manuscript come to me, I would have asked to see substantial acknowledgment, on Tuvel's part, of the vast corpus of writings on passing in African American literature and history. I hope that some familiarity with that literature and history would give anyone a lively sense of why a defense of "transracialism" would be met with great resistance in some quarters and, more specifically, that it would give analytic philosophers a lively sense of why an analogy between transgender identity and transracial identity isn't simply a matter of devising "if p then q" propositions. I might also have noted that Adolph Reed, Jr., published a far more incendiary comparison of the Caitlyn Jenner and Rachel Dolezal cases, in his usual take-no-prisoners style, for the Web site *Common Dreams*. Reed concluded that "there is no coherent, principled defense of the stance that transgender identity is legitimate but transracial is not, at least not one that would satisfy basic rules of argument."

3. I recently revisited this argument in "Profession, Revise Thyself—Again."

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The Ways Our  
Students Write Now

ANNE RUGGLES GERE

*Composition studies concentrates on students, not texts. We in this field want to know who our students are. What abilities to use language do they bring to the academy? What new kinds of intellectual work are they able to do? What challenges does academic discourse pose for them? These are research questions we explore with rigor but also compassion and, sometimes, admiration.*

—Patricia Bizzell (442)

IT WOULD BE EASY TO ASSUME THAT OUR STUDENTS WRITE, OR AIM TO WRITE, THE WAY WE DO. AFTER ALL, WE, THEIR INSTRUCTORS, PROVIDE them with models and sustained tutelage. Yet, while many students learn to negotiate the genres and conventions of specific disciplines as they proceed through college, their writing also moves beyond the concepts and practices we offer because they have views and desires of their own. A look at history reveals that students' concepts and practices have, in fact, long shaped the ways writing is approached in the academy, and consideration of a recent longitudinal study demonstrates some of the ways students continue that shaping process. The academy, then, offers a space of mutual influence where the expectations and goals of faculty members intersect with the interests and practices of student writers.

Take, for example, the pedagogical practices of peer review, which have appeared in classrooms from the turn of the twentieth century to the present.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes called writing workshops, peer response, or writing groups, these practices require students to read and critique one another's prose in order to become better writers. Peer review can be traced to students' literary societies and clubs that blossomed in the nineteenth century and continued to flourish into the middle of the twentieth. Writing in 1895, David Frankenger described the importance of literary societies, in which students regularly shared their writing with and received critiques from fellow students: "They form a great practice department in English composition and elocution. The work is so certain, and so uniform in quality, that it may be looked upon as part, and not an unimportant part

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either, of the students' training" (138). Over time, the habits of literary societies and clubs were absorbed into the curriculum. Stephen Wilbers, for example, traces the way student clubs at the University of Iowa in the late nineteenth century required members to "read original work, after which the group would respond with suggestions," a practice eventually adopted by professors: "While there was nothing particularly unique about this approach (writers have always asked friends and colleagues for feedback), the practice formalized by these clubs provided a format that could be incorporated into the classroom" (20). Beginning in the 1970s, as a process-oriented approach to writing instruction took hold, peer review became widely used, as it is today.

To be sure, student interests and practices often combine with other forces as they are incorporated into courses and syllabi. For instance, the emergence of film studies, as narrated by Michael Zryd, was first enacted by student clubs and film societies on college campuses as well as by various film associations, film critics, and innovative films. Together these disparate influences contributed to the emergence of academic departments devoted to film studies. Similarly, for peer review, progressive instructors played key roles during the first half of the twentieth century, until the convergence of changes in theories of language, shifting views on the role of the instructor, and a move away from writing as product toward writing as process provided the momentum that made peer review a commonplace in writing studies. Nonetheless, we should not overlook the extent to which students' commitment to writing and their ways of reading and responding to one another's writing also ushered peer review into college classrooms. Such evidence of how students have contributed to the curricula of writing courses suggests that learning more about how students are writing now can help us consider the potential effects of their writing practices in the spaces of mutual influence we occupy.

Acting on the long-held assumption that students' writing development is closely linked to disciplinary expertise, we faculty members have established programs of study that begin with first-year writing courses designed to prepare students to write in disciplinary contexts. We reinforce this beginning with courses required for a major as well as capstone courses that focus on "writing like" experts in the given field. On some campuses, upper-level writing-course requirements, designed to be fulfilled in the major field of study, further support the belief that expertise in writing can be equated with knowledge of a specific field. Operating from this perspective, we consider students' writerly growth as directly linked to their developing mastery of a discipline's content, methods, genres, and epistemologies.

Currently, students are challenging this link by making choices about majors, minors, and courses, choices that can subvert the assumptions and intentions of the programs of study we have created. On my campus, for example, the upper-level writing requirement was created on the principle that disciplinary expertise and effective writing are inextricably bound and that the requirement should be "generally completed in the major" (Gere et al. 246). Despite institutional policies and the courses that enact them, we found that only fifty percent of students took the required upper-level writing course in their major. In explaining their reasons for fulfilling the requirement outside their major, students frequently said that they wanted the knowledge and skills offered by a writing course in another department, suggesting a desire for a more capacious approach to writing. Significantly, when they were surveyed about the expected role of writing in their future careers, forty-six percent responded that it would be very important.<sup>2</sup> In other words, students recognized the value of becoming effective writers, but many resisted limiting their writing development to the intellectual

realm of a single discipline in favor of taking a more multidisciplinary approach to writing. Further probing showed that many faculty members and graduate student instructors who teach upper-level writing courses shared students' doubts about the assumption that disciplinary expertise and effective writing are synonymous. They questioned the goal of encouraging student writers to emulate disciplinary experts since few students will actually become experts in the field. Instead, these faculty members and instructors favored the development of more-general writing skills, thereby raising additional questions about the link between disciplinary expertise and writing development.

In a longitudinal study that followed students' development as writers across their undergraduate years, several colleagues and I found even more evidence that students wanted to create their own multidisciplinary paths toward effective writing (Gere, *Developing Writers*). Interviews with a subset of the 169 students in our study yielded many accounts from students who, having achieved competence as disciplinary writers in one field, sought to combine it with competence in another field. Stephanie, for example, was an English major whose honors thesis on *The Fairie Queene* had been commended for its considerable research, demonstration of original thinking, and expression of complex ideas in lucid prose. She described writing as having "huge importance in my life. I'm an English major. . . . I'm always writing essays. I'm always researching. I'm always thinking about how to interact with the writers I'm reading about." But Stephanie also majored in actuarial math and went on to a career in insurance underwriting. In reflecting on how she saw the relation between her two majors and their effect on her writing, she said, "The math side helps me weave from step one to step two to step three, whereas the English has helped me say *why* that is step one. Why step two follows step one" (Gere, "Writing"). For Stephanie, ef-

fective writing integrates the logical delineations of mathematics with the literary capacity to interpret and explain complex relationships.

Many of the students in our study selected a multidisciplinary path, instead of concentrating on a single discipline, as they traveled toward greater expertise in writing, but they expressed various motivations for their choices. Stephanie's explanation of decisions about her two majors emphasized pragmatic issues. She knew that writing in actuarial math could strengthen her analytic capacities, and she found great pleasure in the insights gained from writing required by her English major. For Kris, a biology major, the route toward effective writing grew from a desire to make science more accessible: "One of my goals is to be able to communicate with people who aren't in academia but need access to scientific information. . . . We need to be able to communicate our research to these people. I'm from a rural community myself, and I want to make science accessible to people there" (Gere, "Writing"). Kris became a writer through philosophy. She did not find the required first-year developmental writing course particularly inspiring, but she was drawn to philosophy because it gave her a different way of thinking and provided insights into how scientists write. She found she could write about science using philosophical principles, as she did in writing a philosophy paper about the faulty arguments of the antivaccination movement. Ultimately, she wrote a thesis in biology and a successful National Science Foundation application, but she credited philosophy with helping her explain scientific concepts to colleagues in science and to nonscientists. In these, as in the many other cases we investigated, students chose majors, minors, and courses to prepare for the types of work and writing they imagined for themselves.

Student goals, like explaining scientific concepts or fine points of actuarial math to nonspecialists, raise questions about how

written genres function in the mutually influencing spaces of the academy. We faculty members continually reimagine, write about, and discuss genre. As *Remapping Genres*, a capacious collection of essays in the October 2007 issue of *PMLA*, shows, literary-genre studies moves in many directions and raises fascinating questions for scholars in a range of fields. Rhetorical-genre studies, as articulated by scholars like Carolyn Miller, Amy Devitt, and David Russell, frames genre as social action, recognizing the complex interactions of factors like the social, cultural, institutional, and disciplinary forces that shape writing, and it has added a dynamic dimension to the ways scholars in writing studies think about texts. Both literary- and rhetorical-genre studies speak to a seemingly basic need to classify writing. Few undergraduates have read genre theory of any sort, but many respond to the need for classification by developing their own systems. When Heather Lindemann asked four of her students (college seniors) to sort selections of their own writing into categories, they focused on the goals or purposes of their writing rather than on its formal features or recurring patterns. CJ sorted texts into those that open conversations and those that close discussion, while Robert grouped his texts into “writing for a grade,” which was not particularly important to him; “writing for money,” such as scholarship applications; and “reactionary writing,” in which he was deeply invested. All the students in Lindemann’s study developed new and form-based categories for their writing, demonstrating an understanding of genre in terms of the rhetorical purposes it serves, not merely the textual conventions it displays.

Faculty-created writing assignments likewise lead students to consider and develop categories of writing that often challenge academic language about genre. In their analysis of a collection of interviews in which undergraduates talk about assignments and the writing they elicit, Lizzie Hutton and

Gail Gibson found that students tend to divide writing into two apparently mutually exclusive genres: “academic,” which communicates thought through reproducible forms, and “creative,” which enables the generation of thought. A few, however, understood their writing as a combination of the two, as Grace did: “my writing had always been really formulaic, but writing is a kind of art and shouldn’t be so formulaic. It’s something that has to be creative . . . but it has to be organized, and I’m always trying to figure out how to match the creativity with the organization.” Students like Grace and her many peers often see writing assignments as focused on conventions, precluding the “creative” writing that helps them generate ideas. In response, they resist some of their convention-bound writing assignments because they have not been helped to see the rich rhetorical knowledge that producing academic writing can engender. Some, like Grace, come to understand how the two genres can be integrated in an “academic-creative hybrid,” but many continue to see and produce writing framed in dichotomous terms. Students’ impulse to create categories or taxonomies to describe their writing and their perceptions about assignments suggests the value of learning more about how they think about genre and of involving them in discussions of genre, often considered the domain of academics.

Feedback, as well as the grades given to writing, evokes emotional responses in faculty members and students. As Paul Reid reports, grading has elicited feelings of resentment from some instructors since at least 1876, when Francis J. Child, Harvard’s Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, exclaimed, “‘Twenty-five years [grading themes]’ and then . . . kicked his chair halfway across the room” (274). Over the years, scholarship has provided instructors with best practices for giving feedback (Brannon and Knoblach; Connors and Lunsford; Sommers; Sprinkle), and it has been assumed that feed-

back is successful when students make the recommended changes in their texts, but no attention has been given to the ways students understand and feel about the comments they receive. In their analysis of the perceptions that students articulated in survey responses, interviews, and reflective writing collected during the longitudinal study, Emily Wilson and Justine Post found both acceptance of and resistance to instructor feedback, but, surprisingly, acceptance in itself did not guarantee progress. Instead, in many cases, uncritical acceptance led to a lack of confidence and an inability to discern quality in writing. Lauren, for example, gladly accepted instruction: “Instructors are going to be the people that are going to be grading your paper, so like if you get feedback directly from them, you cannot go wrong, because you just follow what they say.” By simply following directions, Lauren could not benefit from her instructor’s influence to develop an understanding of how to write more effectively the next time.

According to Wilson and Post, students who engaged critically with instructors’ comments developed awareness of the various purposes writing serves beyond the assignment at hand and of an audience broader than the instructor. Critical engagement also took the form of questioning or disagreeing with instructor feedback. More commonly, though, critical engagement led students to new insights about their text and writing more generally. Dariella, for instance, explains, “Professors give out the goal of the paper. You [the student] know what you want to get out of a research paper, who your target audience is, and the best way to write to them.” Dariella outlines the mutual influence that emerges from critical engagement, as the student negotiates conventions and expectations, on the one hand, and more individuated responses, on the other, producing writing that Child would be happy to grade.

Perhaps our most common response when we consider the ways our students write

today is to remark on their digital writing, particularly on social media. It is true that many students use various forms of digital writing and that many go on to take jobs that require them to convey information in digital form. But the bigger story is that the status of writing itself is shifting, and our students are on the leading edge of that shift. Deborah Brandt came to this perception by studying the writing that is part of the everyday working lives of millions of people in our information economy. She asserts, “As writing takes up more time and mental energy, it changes ratios between reading and writing in people’s daily literacy experiences. Increasingly, reading occurs within acts of writing and often as an interaction between one writer and another” (13). Counterintuitive as this argument may sound, it begins to make sense when we think of the changing nature of many jobs, the influence of social media, and the many online platforms where writers share their work. When informants are asked about writing, they may not think to talk about reading, but in our study, it was striking how few students mentioned reading as important to their writing. Looking specifically at young adults aged fifteen to twenty-five, Brandt contrasts their “writing-based literacy development outside of school with the kind of reading-based literacy development that is both presumed and promoted by the school, one in which writing ability is treated as a subsidiary or an outgrowth of reading ability” (14).

Our longitudinal study of student writers confirmed the significance of extracurricular writing-based literacy development. Personal blogs; online platforms like *Tumblr*, *Facebook*, *Fanfiction*, and *Twitter*; campus magazines, both print and online; social clubs; religious organizations; political groups; student government; e-mail; internships; campus newspapers; and jobs—these were some of the places students said they were writing (Gere, *Developing Writers*). The category of jobs is especially capacious, since students included

both on- and off-campus work, as well as research and assistantships that were often unpaid but sought-after since they offered valuable experience and résumé building.

Brandt explains the motivations of young adults as entailing “vocational aspiration—a growing awareness of how writing is associated with occupations and life work” (14), and this, too, aligns with what students said in the longitudinal study. When asked about writing in the discipline in which they fulfilled their upper-level writing requirement, students frequently summoned the word *professional*, which appeared to be shorthand for many features of style and convention in addition to a range of rhetorical strategies that could prepare them for life after college (Gere, *Developing Writers*). An English major, for instance, noted that “it is important for all university students to know how to write in a professional manner because writing is a part of our everyday lives and is necessary in almost any career,” and a student in archaeology and anthropology asserted that the upper-level writing requirement “gives me an opportunity to look at the writing styles and thought processes I will use in my future job” (qtd. in Gere et al. 259). This emphasis on writing’s importance for future employment characterized the responses of many students and demonstrates, especially since our subjects were being asked about a specific course, the extent to which students’ vocational aspirations shape the ways they understand and practice writing.

Attending to student voices and texts illuminates the potential benefits of mutual influence, if we faculty members are willing to listen. The institutional formations of disciplines, manifested in departmental structures, appear to be at some distance from the epistemologies that lead students to chart their own multidisciplinary journeys as writers. Current scholarly discussions of genre, especially the speculative boundary-stretching conversations, remain largely inaccessible to

students, but they could inform pedagogy, enabling students to exercise their predilections for classifications and social action. The human costs of providing feedback on student writing could pay higher dividends if students were enabled to call on strategies of critical engagement as they respond to instructors’ comments and suggestions. More students might enroll in the humanities if we faculty members attended to their perceptions of the importance of writing to their futures, while also taking full advantage of the spheres of mutual influence on our campuses.

## NOTES

1. I narrate this history in *Writing Groups*.
2. For a full explanation of the study that yielded these statistics, see Gere et al.

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## We Write with Scissors

TERRI KAPSALIS

ON OUR FRIGID FIRST DAY OF CLASS, ONE WEEK AFTER DONALD TRUMP'S INAUGURATION, MY COTEACHER, CHRISTA DONNER, AND I began our course Community Zine Projects at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with the question, Why zines now? In this era of blogs and *Twitter*, these tiny-edition handmade paper publications might seem irrelevant. So why take this class? The answers offered by this group of undergraduate and graduate student artists, writers, scholars, and educators were inspiring.

Zines allow us to control the means of production, they said. They are DIY, handmade, homegrown. There is a local-food movement, so why not a local-publishing one? The zine format can be your own container garden.

Zines are tangible. Making them is a physical act, not simply a cerebral one.

Zines can be intimate, small, covert. They can hide in a pocket and be passed between people easily and discreetly.

Zines lend themselves to collaboration: a single zine can contain multiple voices, and many communities of zine makers regularly meet and swap zines.

Zines can inspire conversation through face-to-face or, rather, hand-to-hand distribution. But, then again, like prayer cards, they can be left on buses and trains or just about anywhere a chance reader might find them.

Zines are democratizing, another student said, and don't cost much to make. They can be given away.

Zines are immediate; agile responses, they can be made quickly.

Zines can be a tool for "outsiders" or the "underground." The term *zine* has origins in sci-fi and punk subcultures. Some people who don't feel they have a voice in mainstream culture have found one through zines.

Zines are a way for marginalized people to get their voices out there right away. Many more people have access to a copier and a stapler than they do to a computer.

TERRI KAPSALIS is the author of *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Duke UP, 1997), *The Hysterical Alphabet* (White-Walls, 2008), and *Jane Addams' Travel Medicine Kit* (Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, 2011). Her most recent essay, "Hysteria, Witches, and the Wandering Uterus: A Brief History; or, Why I Teach *The Yellow Wallpaper*," appeared in *Literary Hub*. She is a founding member of Theater Oobleck, a longtime collective member of the Chicago Women's Health Center, and adjunct full professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Zines offer a kind of permission. A zine maker does not need to be considered a master or authority to make a contribution. Zines champion the particular and, by their humble nature, eschew false claims of expertise.

Zines can be used to legitimate individual and group realities. Zines can be antidotes to the hegemonic presumptions of mainstream media.

Zines don't usually have a digital trail. Writers can be completely anonymous. "Safety," one student said, and others nodded. This class was made up mostly of students of color and students who identified themselves as female, trans, and/or queer. If safety hadn't already been a concern, it was on their minds in January 2017.

Zine trolls are hard to find. Unlike its digital cousin, social media, zine culture tends to be a gift economy and is not as prone to toxic comments and attacks.<sup>1</sup> We recognized the medium to be incredibly diverse and cautioned one another against making too many utopian generalizations but agreed that we are drawn to zines for a reason.

We talked about the urgency we felt now. Zines are frequently political. Some of the students talked about artists and protests. What can makers do? Some mentioned their conflicted feelings about Day without Art and the closing of galleries and museums as a form of resistance. Others mentioned artists who had ceased aspects of their art practices in favor of direct political protest. I told them about my cousin Thomas H. Kapsalis, a painter who taught at our school for fifty-two years and who, at ninety-one, continues to paint brightly colored geometric abstracts. In his first year of art school, he was drafted into World War II. Taken prisoner in the Battle of the Bulge, he nearly died of starvation. During the Vietnam War my cousin, by then a devoted pacifist, gave up color in protest, and for ten years his canvases held only black, white, and grays. There was a hush in the classroom as I finished my story.

When we reconvened after a short break, I passed out scissors. Some of the students needed a tutorial, but many of them already knew how to fabricate a minizine: a single piece of paper folded many times with a single cut on one fold that results in an eight-page booklet. Seven days later, our students arrived with small stacks of the minizines they had composed and constructed, dealing them out like packs of cards. We each sat with our own pile of twelve minipublications in front of us. Siobhan Thompson, a graduate student in the writing program, held her zine up in the air, a spirited tract titled *A zine for disappointed kanye west fans*, and exclaimed that, for her, this was a liberation, to go from spark to object in hand all in one week!

I came to zines as a writer who loves scissors. I have always envied makers who push materials around with their hands. The cut-up method came to my attention through the writings of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, who declared writers to be decades behind painters and insisted that the cut-up was an opportunity to catch up. Whenever I have wanted to reimagine a draft of a story, I have followed Burroughs and Gysin's lead, taking scissors and dutifully cutting a page of text into quadrants and rearranging them. Inevitably, I discover something of note. As Burroughs and Gysin write, "You cannot *will* spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors" (29). I found that the reassembled quadrants often revealed secrets. As Burroughs and Gysin promised, cutting through a text was akin to cracking open a lock on space and time. Breaking up "word lines" is a technique I return to again and again.

Scissors are for fiction only. Or so I thought, until I was commissioned by the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum to write an "alternative label" for Jane Addams's travel medicine kit. The Alternative Labeling project, brainchild of the activist, scholar, and curator

Lisa Lee, was conceived as a way to question standard museum labeling and its didactic conventions. My label would be installed in Addams's bedroom near her little leather kit with its four vials of pills and powder.

It wasn't the length of museum labels that I resisted. Being a fan of short forms, including flash fiction, I wanted to embrace brevity. After months of research I had written pages of short paragraphs. Bits regarding Addams's health and medical history. Short imagined conversations between Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a frequent Hull-House visitor. Field notes I took while observing the pharmacist and forensic scientists who agreed to investigate the contents of the pills and powders in the kit. Inspired by Addams's writings, I created miniature meditations on social justice, on domesticity, on peace and antagonism, on medicine and poison. Pages and pages of these short bits with no order in sight. I had to find a way to sort, to understand the arc of what I had done. I needed to push the words with my hands. I found my friend, the scissors, and cut up my pages into more than 120 discrete bits and used the whole surface of the dining-room table to stack and fan and swap and reassemble.

FIG. 1

Jane Addams's medicine kit (right) and Terri Kapsalis's *Jane Addams' Travel Medicine Kit* (left) on display at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, University of Illinois, Chicago.



I imagined the resulting text as a long folded-paper accordion of labels that might be affixed to the museum wall, but instead the long prose poem was published in book form,<sup>2</sup> set on a shelf in Addams's bedroom next to her open leather medicine kit, which sat under a small glass dome (fig. 1). There visitors could sit and read and have a "slow museum" experience, encountering passages such as these:

To be at war with social expectations. To be at war with one's own mind. When we battle ourselves, just who is battling whom? How to be a pacifist here too? (29)

Addams often quoted John Stuart Mill: *There is nothing, after disease, indigence, and guilt, so fatal to the pleasurable enjoyment of life as the want of a proper outlet of active faculties.* (31)

What if this medicine kit contains Mill's remedy? How might "proper outlet of active faculties" appear under a dissecting microscope? (31)

Marc Fisher, a cofounder of Half Letter Press, visited our zine class during our second month together. He talked about the fact that prisoners have no access to the Internet and are not allowed to communicate with one another by letter. But printed materials are allowed.

Marc has made a number of self-published books and booklets for prisoners and by prisoners, and Half Letter Press has distributed them.

Marc told us about the press's recent reprint of a 1975 feminist booklet titled *Consciousness-Raising Guidelines*, with a new forward by the organizer, educator, and abolitionist Mariame Kaba and an afterword by the historian and writer Jaqui Shine. The booklet includes sections titled "Supplemental Guidelines for Black Women" and "Supplemental Guidelines for Youth Women (14-19)." Marc explained that Kaba's and Shine's extensive social-media following

caused the publication to sell out immediately. He described his scramble to print and mail booklets to keep up with the demand. Yes, the publication had been available as a PDF file all along, but people ordered paper.

We discussed the importance of leaving our own paper trails. We discussed the fact that if we don't tell our own stories we risk having others do it for us. And with a zine, we don't need any green light to make our work. We don't need to wait for permission. We are the only permission we need.

At a Chicago reading of *Lincoln in the Bardo*, George Saunders talked about scissors. In making his magnificent novel, he cut apart pages of "close historical accounts" of Lincoln and his son, most of them actual, but some of them fabricated. In a *Bomb* interview with Sam Lipsyte, Saunders says, "I remember sitting in my shed having typed everything up, cut it up with scissors, and moved it around. I had a long day of that, and thought, God, what would my writer friends think? I'm not *writing*. But when I looked at version ten or eleven, it was a lot better than the one I'd started with. It's a form of curation, really." I would add that it's also a way to contemplate relations among various modes, genres, and disciplines. Scissors can be a great party host, instigating introductions between history, fiction, interview, theory, poetry, epitaph, instruction manual, store ledger, and anything else that uses words. Ironically, scissors aid us in bringing unlike things together. Scissors are a tool for grafting hybrid forms, for making chimeras and monsters and other creatures that regenerate tales.

Is this even writing? Is it curation? Perhaps it is both. In *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*, Ellen Gruber Garvey asserts that as far back as Civil War times, and probably before that, scrapbooks were a form of writing and curation. They were a common way in the nineteenth century to

manage a growing barrage of newspapers and magazines. Lincoln had a scrapbook. Frederick Douglass had one. Sarah Bernhardt too. Garber writes that for many who kept them, including African Americans and women's-rights activists, scrapbooks were a way of making their own stories out of news sources: "They collected, concentrated, and critiqued accounts from a press they did not own, to tell their own stories in books they wrote with scissors" (4). Not unlike zines, scrapbooks were a means of telling one's own stories when mainstream media wasn't doing so.

The self-publishing impulse has a long and complicated history, which has included everything from scrapbooks to street preachers' broadsides to political pamphlets. As Anne Elizabeth Moore writes, "The Underground Railroad produced coded maps in the form of bed-covers just as the Vageniuses popularize their appearance in town with wheat-pasted flyers. Both groups work against mainstream culture to bring their unique voice to people; both use whatever available means they can muster to do so." Scissors and glue were the means primarily available to makers of early zines, which often had the look of ransom notes. If a maker wanted a particular font or look or image, cutting and pasting was the only way.

For our course's midterm project, Christa and I asked students to create a zine based on one or more interviews. One student, Greg Ruffing, interviewed an artist whose installation was banned from a neighborhood art fair because of its powerful critique of local gentrification. Zuri Washington's zine, *Talk to Me*, focused on fellow autistic adults and the sparse resources available to them. Ana Maria Gonzalez Sierra's *We Were Shaken* was based on interviews with four Ecuadorian students who were living abroad during the devastating 2016 earthquake and looked at how they responded to this collective trauma from a distance. The zine-course participants had created writing that listens and asks questions, that calls us to

action, that encourages the reader to make a contribution rather than to be a docile recipient. Writing that makes us aware of our frailty as people, as a planet, as nations.

When undergraduate and graduate thesis students are lost in a long draft, I tell them: take a scissors to it! I channel Burroughs and Gysin with some incarnation of their question “How many discoveries have been made by accident?” and their pronouncement that “we cannot produce accidents to order” (32). But we do have scissors. Students’ eyes routinely light up when I mention scissors because the very suggestion of that level of destruction is just the ticket. These are artist-scholars, so the intention is clear to them. Break it up, mix it around, and see what arises. They are used to an artist’s sharp tools, and many other professions have similar instruments—the surgeon’s scalpel, the barber’s razor, the cook’s knife. Why shouldn’t writers have one too?

Taking scissors to something I have written is often thrilling. It is a defamiliarization, a way to undo assumptions and to see writing anew. It is a relinquishing of preciousness. Words are not owned by us. Gysin made a permutation poem titled “No Poets Don’t Own Words.” Words exist to be undone. They are malleable material, not gospel. And even gospel is there to be messed with, as the musician, composer, mystic, and wordsmith Sun Ra did in his Thmei Research group, permuting passages from the Bible to decipher coded language that had protected the scriptures’ actual meanings from distortions of translation. Those old texts contain layers of signification, and breaking things apart can help us get at deeper revelations.

In the Joan Flasch Artists’ Book Collection at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, there are many examples of works made with scissors—hundreds of zines, as well as beautifully constructed books by Barbara Kruger, Simon Morris, and Ann Tyler.

In these artists’ creations, the use of a sharp tool is clearly visible. However, there are writers in whose work the use of scissors is not obvious at all, and yet I suspect that cutting utensils are an important part of their processes. I would like to ask the poet Harryette Mullen about scissors. Maggie Nelson, Michael Ondaatje, and Claudia Rankine, as well. I would have liked to ask Theresa Hak Kyung Cha about scissors too.

“From Andersen’s shears / the fairy tale appears!” Hans Christian Andersen once wrote about the cutouts he made (Andersen 142). From the curator Hendel Teicher, I learned that Andersen carried around a pair of scissors and would tell stories while practicing the art of papercutting.<sup>3</sup> Andersen’s paper artworks were elaborate and intricate, sometimes picturing Andersen himself with miniature people dancing around his nose or head. Story and paper cut would often finish at the same time.

Jane Addams’s bedroom contains another label. I had forgotten about it completely until some years after writing the one for her travel medicine kit. This other label is the facsimile of a column titled “Ask Miss Benedict” from a Hull-House newsletter published in 1939, about four years after Addams’s death. The column begins “Miss Benedict knows:” and details how Addams wrote a book. Addams

took a long piece of butcher string. She knotted one end and put the other through a big needle. Whenever she had an idea she would put it on a scrap of paper, no matter what she was doing. When she had time she went back and threaded the scraps of paper on to her string. After a while she had a garland of ideas, as full of flavor as the strings of garlic we see on Halsted Street.

Then came the great moment. She took them off and began to sort. She had them on the table and on the bed, all around her as far as eye could reach. Whenever anyone went by she would ask, “Do you think this belongs

with this? Which comes after that?” Everybody helped. Or felt they had. (That in itself was one of Miss Addams’s great gifts.) (Benedict)

With my scissors, I had unwittingly cut through time and found my way into Addams’s writing process. I had even asked readers of early drafts of my label, “Do you think this belongs with this? Which comes after that?”

Burroughs and Gysin did not invent the use of scissors in writing, nor did Addams. I do appreciate Burroughs and Gysin’s expansive definition of the cut-up, which includes scissor-based creations with no text whatsoever. I am drawn to consider Addams’s books in relation to the innovative quilts of the women of Gee’s Bend and the story cloths of Hmong refugees, some of which recount tales of escaping Laos into Thailand across the Mekong River.

In the spirit of Addams, the Gee’s Bend quilters, and the Hmong story-cloth makers, the “We” in my title—“We Write with Scissors”—asserts that composition always takes place in community. “We” is not prescriptive. “We” is not a royal singular, but a pluralistic collaborative. There is no such thing as a scissor. No matter how alone our writing practice feels, we don’t write in isolation. We are always, whether we like it or not, part of a writing gang that includes past memories, present communities, and all the language we have ever encountered.


Sharp tools are required. In the documentary *BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez*, the poet, playwright, and legend of the black arts movement Sonia Sanchez says, “We had to splice up many a thing, to scrape the veneer that was on America, the veneer that was on

FIG. 2

Excerpt from Siobhan Thompson’s zine *Indian Blood*. Image courtesy of Siobhan Thompson.

everyone says--

“your dad loves you so much.  
i’ve never seen anything like it.”



i know this is true. it’s one of the very few things i am sure of. my dad and i are mostly the same: from the way we laugh, our wide nose, the tattoos on our arms.

dad says:

“you are your father’s daughter.”

i think, “that’s s all i want to be.” and i *have* always felt like my father’s daughter, except in one way.

my father’s blood quantum is 100%. **‘blood quantum’** is how much indian blood you have. this is important, because if you **don’t have enough indian blood**, you cannot legally belong to your tribe. you don’t qualify for the benefits or reparations given to tribal members.

my blood quantum is 50%. i’m allowed to be a member of my tribe. so will my children. but their children won’t.

apparently, it’s exactly that easy to kill the indian.

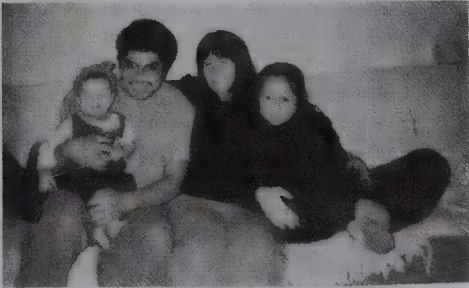
oneida tribal law states that **you must have at least 25% oneida blood** to be an enrolled tribal member.

as of 2013, only 42% of the oneida tribe had at least 50% oneida blood.

**the last full-blooded oneida baby was born in 2010.**

blood quantum was invented by colonizers with the specific purpose of eradicating the native population.

**blood quantum is a tool of genocide practiced by tribes across the country.**



me, dad, mom, half-sister, 1995

Harlem, the veneer that was on the entire country. And as we scraped we got to some real blood and began to spit out words that the country was paying attention to.” She says that she writes because she “wants to tell people how I became this woman with razor blades between her teeth.”

For her final zine project in our class, Siobhan Thompson created *Indian Blood*, a personal document asserting that blood-quantum law is a form of genocide (fig. 2). She had never written about her Oneida heritage before, not even in her fiction.

Joo Young Lee’s final zine, *Exit 10 Archive*, was the culmination of a year-long project. In May 2016, a woman was murdered by a man near the crowded Gangnam Station in Seoul. The murderer stated that he killed her because he hated women. Lee documented station gate 10 as it became a memorial site (fig. 3).

I keep a handful of copies of *Tom Kap-salis’s Protest* in my bag. The zine contains Christa’s ink drawings and my text, most of the words drawn from an interview we did with Tom in February 2017, a few weeks after our class discussion about this decorated war veteran’s Vietnam protest. Each copy costs a little over one dollar to produce, so I hand one to anybody I think might be interested. I took twenty of them to Tom and

his wife, Stella. They phoned the next day to tell me how moved they were by the zine, that it just seemed to happen in a flash and that books never work that way. Would I send copies to some of Tom’s colleagues, and would I give one to this person and one to that? Yes, of course.

Tom particularly appreciated the way the text was fragmented. “It looks very modern,” said the abstract painter. The zine’s designer, Mulan Leong-Suzuki, had used one of Tom’s paintings as a layout grid, cutting and pasting his words into unconventional geometric blocks (fig. 4), recalling Burroughs and Gysin’s proposal to apply the painter’s technique to writing and suggesting one way that writing might finally catch up (13).

NOTES

1. Wortham echoed some of these ideas in “Why the Internet Didn’t Kill Zines,” an article on our syllabus.
2. This book, *Jane Addams’ Travel Medicine Kit*, can be read online at [cdn.flipsnack.com/iframehtml5/embed.html?hash=fzc30utd](http://cdn.flipsnack.com/iframehtml5/embed.html?hash=fzc30utd).
3. Teicher showed Andersen’s cutouts alongside Burroughs and Gysin’s collaborative visual work in a brilliant exhibition titled *Cut-Outs and Cut-Ups: Hans Christian Andersen and William Seward Burroughs at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin in 2008* and documented in the informative catalog she edited.

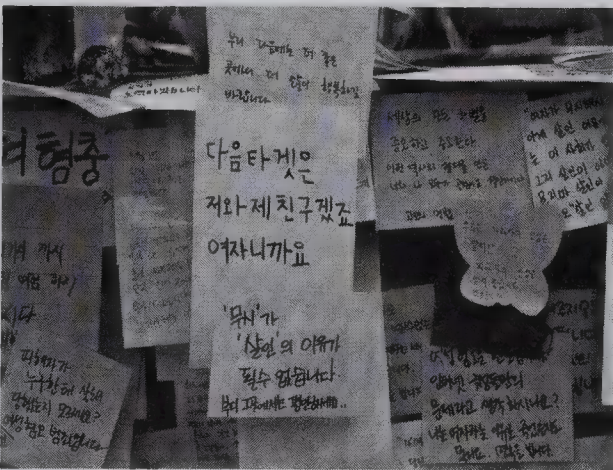
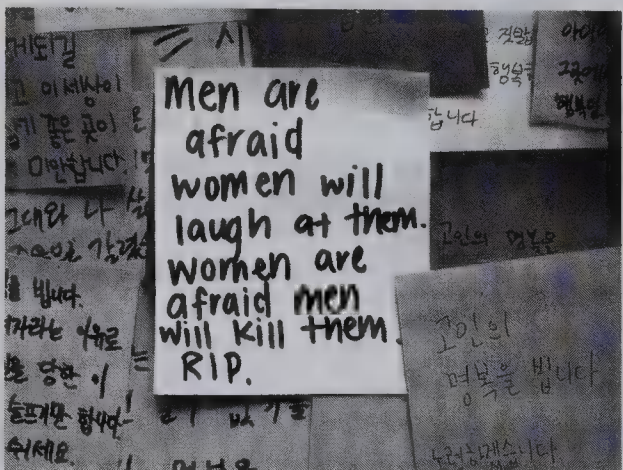


FIG. 3  
Excerpt from Joo Young Lee’s zine *Exit 10 Archive*. Image courtesy of Joo Young Lee.



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The first time I saw "Guernica" was when I was in the history of art class, in a slide that the teacher put on the wall. Picasso only used black, white, and grey. He was not using color because of the seriousness of the bombing of Guernica. It's such a remarkable painting; he has this light and the suffering of the children and women. Then he has that horse. Great painting.

One part is in a pedimental shape. It was interesting because in Greek sculpture they have a pediment.

He used color and then all of a sudden when he did this painting, he got away from color because of the seriousness of what he represented. The bombing and then people suffering. How did Franco get the German airplanes? To bomb the city of Guernica. Must have paid them off.

Then I saw "Guernica" at the Art Institute. At the back, you know where the Georgia O'Keeffe is now? It was there. You just stood by the stairs and there it was.



I thought, I'll do the same thing. I will not use color to protest the Vietnam war.

FIG. 4

Excerpt from the zine *Tom Kapsalis's Protest*. Image courtesy of Christa Donner and Terri Kapsalis.

theories and  
methodologies

Frames of Thought

NICK SOUSANIS

PERMIT ME A BRIEF  
PERSONAL INTRODUCTION:

WHEN I STUDIED  
MATHEMATICS, PEOPLE  
WOULD TELL ME,

"OH, YOU'RE  
SO SMART."

NOW, KNOWN FOR  
MY ART, THEY SAY,

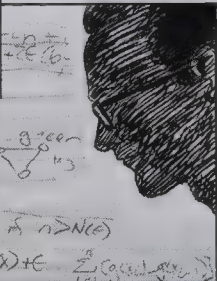
"YOU'RE SO  
TALENTED."

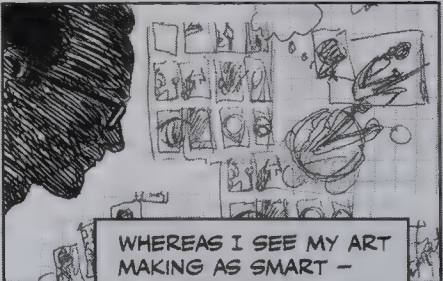
HMMM....

UPON REFLECTION

I BELIEVE I WAS IN FACT  
QUITE TALENTED AT  
MATHEMATICS, THOUGH  
I QUESTION THE DEPTH  
OF MY CONCEPTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING.

$$r(k_2, k_2, k_3)$$
$$\frac{r_{ab}}{k_2} = \frac{b_{ab}}{k_2}$$
$$P_x = \frac{(f_{ab} - f_{cd})/CC}{n - n_{cc}}$$
$$f_{ab} \in \langle f_{ab} \rangle \subseteq f_{ab} \in \sum_{i=1}^n \langle f_{ab} \rangle$$





WHEREAS I SEE MY ART  
MAKING AS SMART -  
FACILITATING WAYS OF  
UNDERSTANDING I  
COULDN'T OTHERWISE.

SUCH DIVISIONS ARE ENGRAINED SO DEEPLY  
IN OUR LANGUAGE SO AS TO SEEM NATURAL.

NICK SOUSANIS is an assistant professor in humanities and liberal studies at San Francisco State University, where he is starting an interdisciplinary program in comics studies. He is the author of *Unflattening*, originally his doctoral dissertation, written and drawn entirely in comics form and published by Harvard University Press in 2015. See more at [www.spinweaveandcut.com](http://www.spinweaveandcut.com).

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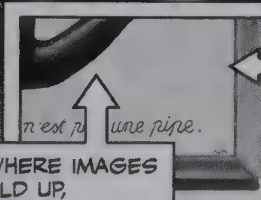
THE QUEST FOR

# KNOWLEDGE

ENSHRINED IN PARTICULAR FORMS,

NUMBERS, WORDS  
DEEMED SUPERIOR,

WHILE THE ARTS ARE SEEN  
AS FRIVOLOUS, DECORATIVE,  
OR AT BEST ILLUSTRATIONAL.



THIS MAY BE  
WORTH A LOT OF WORDS,

BUT THIS IS  
WHAT COUNTS.

EVEN WHERE IMAGES  
ARE HELD UP,

WORDS' AUTHORITY  
OFFERS LEGITIMACY.

The Treachery of Images  
René Magritte (Belgium, 1898-1967)  
La Trahison des images (The Treachery of Images) is one of Magritte's Surrealist paintings and an icon of modern art. Heavily influenced by Freudian psychology, Magritte's word-image painting is a treatise on the impossibility of reconciling words, images, and objects. La Trahison des images challenges the linguistic convention of identifying an image of something as the thing itself.

IMAGES - THESE "SHADOWS OF SHADOWS" AS PLATO CALLED THEM - WERE TOO COMPELLING AN ILLUSION, NOT TO BE TRUSTED.

A BIAS REPLICATED  
DOWN GENERATIONS,

SELF-ENFORCED - AS "WHAT CAME BEFORE" WAS ACCEPTED FOR "HOW IT IS" WITH LITTLE QUESTION.



WHEN DOES LANGUAGE'S LINEAR STRUCTURE FAIL TO SUFFICE?

FOR EVEN AS WE MOVE SEQUENTIALLY, LOCKSTEP THROUGH TIME...

WE ARE  
EVER ADrift  
IN THOUGHT.

SIMULTANEOUS

ALLOVER

ALLATONCE

THE ACTION OF THINKING  
IS NOT-SO-LINEAR.

UNCHAINED FROM  
THE HIERARCHY  
OF LANGUAGE,

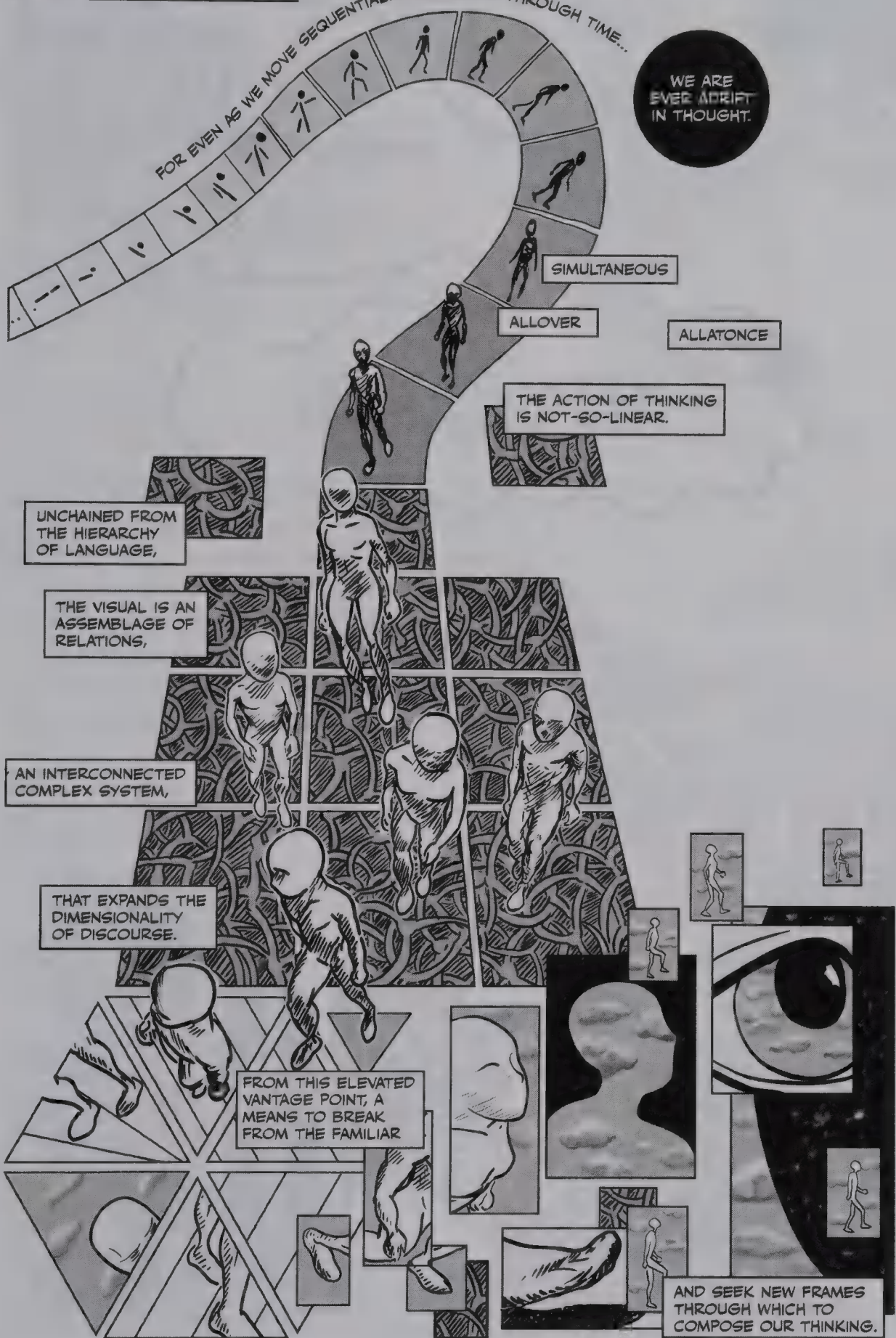
THE VISUAL IS AN  
ASSEMBLAGE OF  
RELATIONS,

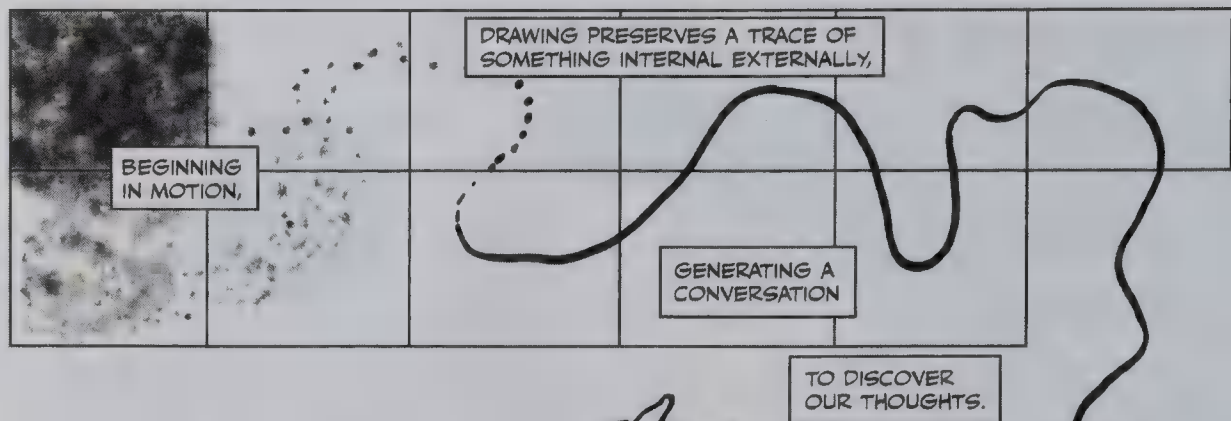
AN INTERCONNECTED  
COMPLEX SYSTEM,

THAT EXPANDS THE  
DIMENSIONALITY  
OF DISCOURSE.

FROM THIS ELEVATED  
VANTAGE POINT, A  
MEANS TO BREAK  
FROM THE FAMILIAR

AND SEEK NEW FRAMES  
THROUGH WHICH TO  
COMPOSE OUR THINKING.



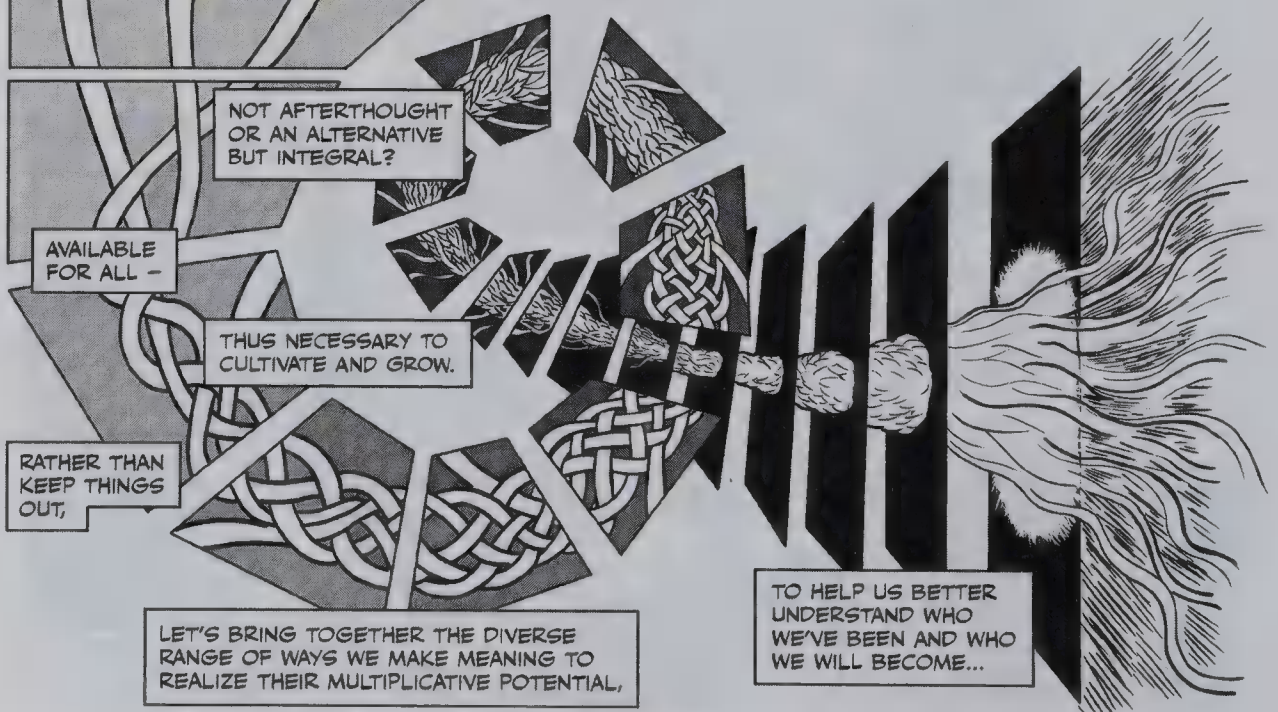


WHERE DID THIS  
IDEA COME FROM?

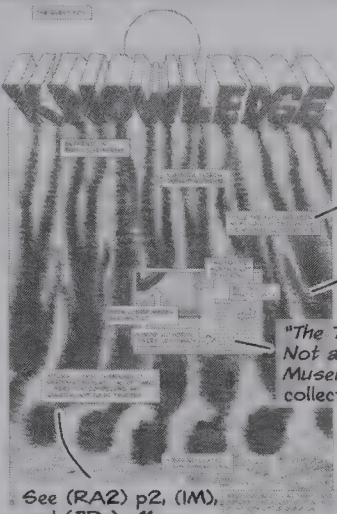
RATHER THAN ART  
RESTRICTED TO THE  
DOMAIN OF THE FEW,  
THE TALENTED...



CAN WE INSTEAD  
RECOGNIZE IT AS A  
FUNDAMENTAL STRAND  
TO WHAT MADE AND  
MAKES US HUMAN,



Notes



See (RA2) p3 and (JDr) pp16-17.

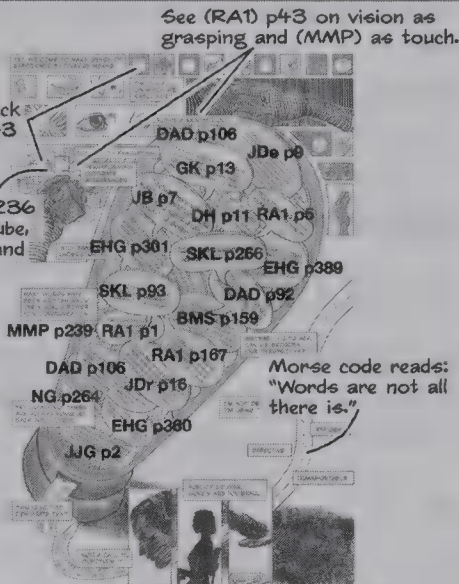
Shadows visually cite (NS1) p54, p109.

"The Treachery of Images (This Is Not a Pipe)." Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 3 Oct. 2017, collections.lacma.org/node/239578.

See (RA2) p2, (IM), and (JDr) p11 on distrust of images.

Visual callback to (NS1) p43 and (NS2).

See (MMP) p236 on seeing a cube, (EHG) p301, and (RA2) p66.



See (RA1) p43 on vision as grasping and (MMP) as touch.

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(NS2) ---. "Upwards." *The Boston Globe*, 24 May 2015, p. K1.

(BMS) Stafford, Barbara Maria. *Visual Analogy*. MIT P, 1999.

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(MS&BT) Suwa, Masaki, and Barbara Tversky. "What Do Architects and Students Perceive in Their Design Sketches? A Protocol Analysis." *Design Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 385-403.

See (AK) on drawing as thinking & (MS&BT) pp385-86 on sketching as having a conversation with yourself.

See (MSJ) on movement as original mode of thinking, (SGM) on gesture, (JAB) on learning to see being easier than to walk, and (LB) "in motion you speak the language that language is based on" p35.

Re: Paul Klee "A line is a dot that went for a walk."

See (RA2) p6 discussion of Schaefer-Simmern's notion that art is "not the privilege of a few gifted specialists" but for all.

WHERE DID THIS IDEA COME FROM?

See (SKL) p143 on the limitations of language's linear structure.

See (SM) on comics as sequential art.

See (TG) on comics as connected systems, (NS1) on simultaneity.

(RA2) p54: "to see means to see in relation."

Also, (NKH) on use of "assemblages" over "network."

After Magritte "The False Mirror," etc.

See (FK) on anarchism and the rhizomatic potential of comics.

(GS) p103 on art's role in reframing subjectivity and (EE) elevating consciousness.

with special thanks to  
Angelika Bammer  
Julia Molinari  
Frederik K hlert

theories and  
methodologies

## Metamorphoses: Fictioning and the Historian's Craft

CARLA NAPPI

CARLA NAPPI is associate professor of history and Canada Research Chair in Historical Pataphysics at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on bodies and their translations in early modernity, especially in the Chinese- and Manchu-speaking worlds. You can find out more about her historical practice—including work with nonfiction, short fiction, and podcasting—at [www.carlanappi.com](http://www.carlanappi.com).

LANGUAGE AND FLESH CREATE EACH OTHER. HERE YOU WILL FIND THREE STORIES, FROM THREE ONGOING PROJECTS, THAT ARE EACH IN

some way about the metamorphosis between word and body. Each story is an example of my use of fiction writing as a scholarly tool: for understanding a map as a material object, for weaving lives from textual fragments, and for making a little world with little gods as a way of exploring a work of theory. Fiction, here, is an apparatus for paying new kinds of attention, as well as a vehicle for creating stories, worlds, and selves to give to others. Some persistent concerns in my fiction writing have deeply influenced how I pay attention to the documents I work with in my research: concerns with materiality and history, with the legibility of bodies, with fragmentariness and the transformative power of desire, with the nature of selves and flesh as constantly in the process of becoming, with voicing and with fiction as technologies of conversion. (I did not understand, before writing “The Gesture of Smoking a Pipe,” which you’ll read below, that there was an important link in Vilém Flusser’s work between physical gesture, selfhood, and the calling down of—and metamorphosis of selves into—gods. Now, the connection between movement, identity, and conversion is becoming central to my work as a historian.) Imagining materiality and metamorphoses this way—and practicing the metamorphosis and conversion of documents—has pointed me toward the ways that materiality and material experience emerge out of relations and relationships and the ways that the kind of orientations that relate bodies in space and time leave traces in our documents.

### [ I ]

Writing is a way of seeing, and fictioning can be a way of seeing documents anew. In the autumn of 2013, I joined a tour of the MIT Museum during which we were shown a map with the following inscription: “In the Province of Sancy was made a round lake here by a deluge in the year 1557. . . . Seven cities were drowned, besides little towns and villages, and a great number of men, only one boy was

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saved in the body of a tree.” I lost the details of the document—this was never an object I was interested in writing a history of, or with—but the boy on the map stayed with me. And so the map did as well. And so I began to imagine this boy. And in imagining him I also began imagining what it was to be underwater, to be submerged, to be inside. And this concern has shaped my research since. It also shaped one of the first stories from a new fiction project that retells the stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* by misreading historical documents. As a storyteller and a historian I understand the state of being a body in the world as an ongoing series of metamorphoses. The *Metamorphoses* project has become a way of exploring that state of being by fictioning with documents in order to see them differently.

We academics tend to treat writing as a tool for producing objects that are consumable by others. And while the *Metamorphoses* stories are meant to be enjoyed on their own terms, they also belong to a writing practice that treats fictioning as part of a process of paying attention, of observing and perceiving documents. Writing fiction is a way to learn to look: at a document (like the map), at a fragment (as you’ll see in section 2), at the implications of—or worlds made by—considering a theory (as you’ll see in section 3). “Boy Tree Flood” is a retelling of Ovid’s flood story, in which Zeus has sent a deluge to wipe out humankind. As you read, you may notice that the story is also a kind of re-creation of the document that inspired it.

Boy Tree Flood

SEA

The earthquake came in the year 1557.  
(Year of the snake. Year of fire. Year of loess and loss and landslide.)  
With the earthquake came the flood. It filled the caves and it covered the cliffs and it leveled the windy plateau and it uprooted the forest of stone.

(Forest of steles, garden of carved words, archive of rock phrases.)

Clay and dust and sand and silt made wet and wave and puddle and salt.

The zodiac drowned along with the people as earth became sea became sky. And the waters entombed the lives unlived. And the waters encrypted the futures unseen. And the waters encorpsed the chance unpredicted. And a new zodiac swam from the waves: the squid, the urchin, the lobster, the swordfish, the limpet, the turtle, the crab.

And they hid in a seascape of newly made caves, echoes of those lost on land, hollowed from coral or stacked from fish bones.

And these became tombs for the lives left unlived, with each watched over by its zodiac guardian.

And each creature—each starfish or crayfish or clownfish—performed its obituary for one of the dead, composed in seaweed and pearls and spiraled shells, danced on long legs or with wings, and on and on while the waters remained.

And in coral memorials danced might-have-beens.

And in piles of shark cartilage sang but-what-ifs.

And in burrows in seashell piles chanted perhapses.

And one boy kneeled in the tides on a cliff and he watched the pool of eulogies.

Because one boy had hidden in a hollowed tree.

And for this reason, one boy was saved.

TREE

(There wasn’t room in the trunk for two.)

BOY

One day the waters dropped into the earth.

And the sun saw the trees and the stones and the soil.

And the sky grew new stars that showed the boy where to go. (And the sky grew new tales that showed the boy how to go.)

One night he looked up and he read in the sky that a man and a woman had also been saved. (But they lived on the other side of the world and they couldn't read the book in the stars and they didn't know how to find the caves with the fish and the crab and the stories in coral.)

So the boy closed his eyes and imagined a bird, and he opened them to find it was perched on his arm. (He looked at the bird and it looked back at him and in that exchange he saw what to do.)

The boy lay down and he opened his arms and he opened his breath and he opened his future.

And he closed his eyes and he closed his mouth and he closed his fists and he closed his what-ifs. And he slowly thinned to a flat bright sheet and the bird looked on as the boy became map.

His skin turned to paper.

His blood became ink.

His spine became mountains.

His thumbs turned to streams.

His name grew into words to mark the landscape.

His curls became scrolling designs to delight.

As the boy changed, his birthmarks stretched and thinned and curved to write his story on the page.

When this was done, the bird bit the map in its long yellow beak and it took itself off to the end of the world. When it found the people, it gave them the map. And when it gave them the map, it pecked at the boy's story. (And then there was where, and then there was why.) After it pecked, it turned to the wind and sang. And after it sang, it burst into a cloud of feathers to offer the man and woman shade on their way. (And then there was what, and then there was how.)

And that is how the world began, with a flood and a tree and a boy.

## [ II ]

Fiction is not only a way to give lives to documents through creative misreading but also a way to bring beings into the world and to voice them. And this brings us to the second project I want to share with you.

This little history of salt is a piece of a project inspired by four women whose names appear in *The Casebooks Project*, an online collection of the case records of two early modern astrologer-physicians. I found each of these women as a small fragment included in this digital archive. Each of them was named Elizabeth. Each lived in early modern England. Each apparently had something wrong with her. That something, for each of the Elizabeths, was related to her relationship with elemental stuff: Elizabeth Sanders had a problem with her liquids ("Case 155"), Elizabeth Woodfall had too much wind inside her ("Case 27326"), Elizabeth Turvey was overcome by an overwhelming heat ("Case 12980"), and Elizabeth Rively had worms where they should not have been ("Case 10597"). I spent a little time with each of them, and rather than write them into history I made them into historians: one of liquids, one of wind, one of flame, and one of burial. And so *The Elizabeths* was born. On the Web site of the project ([theelizabeths.org/](http://theelizabeths.org/)), a work in progress, you can read about the four Elizabeths, learning about their practice as historians and browsing through some of the histories that they might have written: of mercury, of clouds, of fireflies, of smoke, of rain, and more. Here, fictioning is a way to make worlds from fragments, to imagine what a document can be, and to explore what it might look like to make stories with our bodies.

This is a story by Elizabeth Rively, the historian of earth, of burial, of decomposition.

With "The History of Salt," I was trying to understand how telling a story about the past or the future from traces left over from other times (and this, after all, is what a his-

torian does) depends on a kind of observation that constitutes an act of empathy with the material observed. I wanted to explore the violence entailed in that empathy and in that act of looking. And so this story became a way for me to think and write about the connection between history and empathy, between empathy and destruction, without explicitly framing it as such.

Academic writing tends to live within policed walls that restrict access to the work through the increasingly prohibitive cost of academic books and journals. It has become important to me, as a storyteller and a scholar, to make my work accessible to anyone who wants to experience it. Thus, this project lives online and is freely available to anyone with an Internet connection.

### *The History of Salt*

The history of salt is the story of an oracle.

She smelled like the sea and like celery and she lived at the top of a mountain and spent her days trying to find tomorrow in a bowl of bones.

She was a seer of idiosyncratic and unreliable capacities who consistently missed the crucial details. She would see the smile but not the knife, the flush on one cheek but not the tears on the other, hear the sadness and the sigh but not the undertow of laughter pulling them into the sunshine. But her vision was trustworthy, in its way, and its brokenness promised hope, and that was enough for those who sought sight.

Her gift for tomorrow came from a talent for coupling with the surfaces of now. The bones were brought to her, and her eyes found an empathy with the cracks, the parched stained whiteness, the holes of the sponge of the core, and when she looked at them her whole soul looked, and when she snatched pieces of prophesy her whole soul snatched, and it bit off pieces that came to her gnawed at the edges and crystallized with salt.

But tomorrow does not want to be your food, and looking can be a kind of violence, and the bones bit back. Each day she felt pieces of her arms sink into skin and muscle, sharp pain in her shoulders where tiny mouthfuls of scapula went missing. It became hard to hold the bowl as her wrists collapsed into an absence of ulna. In place of these she grew a skeleton of sodium, and it preserved her from the inside until it could not, and it held her steady until it could not, and it let her eyes cradle the brought bones until they could not, and then one night with a full yolky moon she looked lovingly up and came tumbling down.

As her body fell, the mountain consumed her. Its grass took her skin, and its puddles took her voice, and its gravel took her breath, and its beetles took the shining brown of her eyes, and its pinecones wound her hair around themselves, and its tree roots learned the movements of her fingers, and its cats took the soft down that grew on her arms, and its snakes grew scales in the shape of her teeth, and its moths feathered antennae out of her eyebrows, and its cold rain washed the remains of her.

It took the span of the moonrise for the oracle to drop to the foot of the mountain as a bare handful of salty bones. A young girl found them and picked one up and licked the salt off and then did the same with the rest. And as she tasted the bones, she saw her own tomorrow, and she felt a bite in her big toe, and she took out a bowl, and dropped the bones inside, and began her long trek up the mountain.

### [ III ]

Fictioning can be a tool for paying attention together, and collaborative writing has become vital to my thinking and scholarship. This final story comes from a collaborative project in which Dominic Pettman and I have been reading Vilém Flusser's *Gestures* (2014) together, each of us responding to every chapter—each of which examines an individual

gesture—by composing a work of short fiction that explores some aspect of Flusser's theory. (The stories may not seem to have anything to do with the gestures named in their titles—you will find no smoking pipes, below—but each is shaped and informed by some part of Flusser's essay on the gesture that inspired it.) In this work in progress, we are experimenting with what it can look like to write with and about theory. "The Gesture of Smoking a Pipe" is one of the sixteen stories that I have composed for the project, each of which has a partner composed by Dominic. Together, the stories consider how movement and gesture create materialities. Together, the stories make little worlds that we can enter, where we spend time watching and reflecting. And then we come out of those worlds and bring those reflections to our other writing and to our lives. This, also, is what fictioning can do. And with that, I leave you with what I'd like for you to leave this piece with: the final story, below. Thank you for journeying with me, and I hope you enjoy spending some time with a girl and her frog-gods.

### *The Gesture of Smoking a Pipe*

It was autumn and it was cold and she went out in the rain. She walked to a bench in the park and waited there until someone came. A man did come, and he was tall and smelled like cats. She sat with him for a while, silent and still with eyes closed while she tried to imagine herself into his pockets. Eventually she brushed the lint from her eyelashes and stood up and walked away until she came to a large dark puddle.

She bent down and sat beside it, and she waited for the rain to let up enough to still its surface, and when that happened she peered inside and looked for what looked back. When she recognized herself in the water—and this did not always happen, and certainly not right away—she closed her eyes and felt a splash on her face as a tiny frog hopped out of

the puddle and sat on her knee and blinked up at her as she opened her eyes again.

She reached out to touch it. In that gesture of connection, once again she saw herself, and again she felt a splash as two more miniature green frogs hopped from the puddle and settled beside her. She sang to them—just a little—and as she heard herself in the song, she watched as the ground greened, covering itself with little hopping things birthing themselves out of splashes.

She looked around her at the spreading carpet of small green gods with tiny frog eyes and small frog feet that she had called out of the earth in her acts of recognition. (Recognizing yourself is a rare thing, her mother had told her. It almost never happens. It happens all the time. It's the most normal thing in the world. It's a kind of magic. You have to be very patient, and very careful, and know how to look, and know where to watch. It can happen when you're not looking. It will turn you into a magician, her mother told her. You must try never to do it. You must do it as much as possible. You are a goddess, her mother told her. You are nothing special.) She scooped up handfuls of gods and stuffed them into her pockets until she couldn't fit any more, and she nodded to the ones left behind and watched them disappear back into the puddle and got up and brushed leaves off the seat of her pants and wetly walked home.

Her tiny companions made the weather along her way. When a frog-god hiccuped, she heard a peal of thunder. Another one sneezed, and a tree fell over. As she walked past the man on the bench, he looked at one of the little gods and smiled, and when it smiled back the man felt heavy coins filling his hat and socks and mittens. When she walked past trees with the gods in her pockets, for a moment they each sparkled as if strung with lights, until she left them behind and the lights went out.

When she arrived at home, she scooped the gods onto the countertop and poured a

plastic cup of bubble tea into a large saucer and watched as they hopped over to it and tried to balance themselves on the tapioca pearls.

There were no mirrors in her house, no photographs or portraits, no cameras, no laptops, no paper or pens, no magazines or books—nothing to record an image or a sound, nothing to convey herself to herself. She used to have all of these things and she nearly drowned in the clouds that would open up in the ceiling and pour down upon her every time she saw her own reflection in a glass or the description of a character in a story. Jellyfish gods rained down with the water, and her skin would sting with the bites of their long jelly arms. It was better when she was outside. Somehow the puddles helped. She found the frogs more manageable.

She sat down in the kitchen and fanned her fingers out on the table until she could just make out the faintest webbing starting to form between them. She bent her back until it was nearly horizontal, and as the little gods started jumping out of the saucer and over to her, she widened her eyes and they began to bulge out from her head.

She opened her mouth, and one by one the gods jumped inside. When her cheeks were full with them and the saucer was empty, she closed her mouth and began to chew, tasting damp and pebbles and wood and leaves and smoke. As she swallowed divinity, her fingers unwebbed and her eyes receded back into her face and her skin lost its green tinge, and she got up and took herself to bed. That night she dreamed of the man on the bench. And when she woke up soaked, the bed and the floor obscured in a tangle of tentacles, she watched her eight fingers stretch and her knuckles grow suckers and she clicked the little beak forming on her lips, and she sighed, and she readied herself for breakfast.

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## theories and methodologies

# How Do We Write, Now?

GAYATRI  
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## I. Constructing a Recipient

HOW DO WE WRITE, NOW? SINCE I AM WRITING FOR THE PAGES OF THE *PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA*,

I presume the “we” here describes teachers of literature in the United States. I, outside in that “we,” think that most of us write, for a variety of reasons, with the presumed inclusion of “the global South” in our audience; although I also have the feeling that a lot of us, folks that I do not really know, ignore this requirement altogether. Geraldine Heng’s important work has made us aware of this absence in the study of the literature of the Middle Ages. From the early modern era on, however, progressive writing does have this cultural requirement.

I feel out of joint with this requirement. I think *the global South* is a reverse racist term, one that ignores the daunting diversity outside Europe and the United States. We decide to define what we are not by a bit of academic tourism, choosing academics to represent the global South at conferences and in journals from countries elsewhere who have class continuity with us and thus resolving our own sense of ourselves as democratic subjects resisting definition by race and gender. Thus our “we” remains the embarrassed and tacit custodian of a presumed global norm. And the metropolitan (nonmetropolitan academics have passport problems) diasporic stimulus flows over national frontiers, as it were, and goals meaningless to the subaltern (voting groups on the fringe of history) happen to be geographically located in their countries of origin, outside. That’s the “we” carrying a double consciousness, where *double* stands for *global* understood as *abroad*.

I feel out of joint with this phenomenon. Recently persuaded by an old friend to be on the advisory committee of an online journal that is supposed to address and include the global South, I was filled with distaste, because I was convinced that this was the body-count way of being democratic. Recently persuaded by a local university of repute to suit a master class specifically to the demands of the global South, I was troubled by the organizers’ careless constitution of the students in the class, for which the only entry requirement seemed

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to be that students be people of various colors—but there were no African American students—or, for the two white students in the class, that they want to be taught by what they presumed to be my expertise in the subject matter of the course. (The best student, from mainland China, has become a junior colleague in spirit since then.) If, as I have often said, an uncoercive rearrangement of desire is the obligation of the teacher of the humanities, in this case the obligation might have been to shift from the desire to be the global South at all and turn one's eyes toward the class discontinuities within one's own civil society.

How do we write these days? Having narrowed down the “we,” I would say as if to or as the global South.

It is time to remember that subject positions are inscribed in our writing for perusal by others, afterward. I must continue to believe that claiming unique subject positions is the problem—that is, the inability to acknowledge that we cannot look around our own corner and therefore must resist subject positions offered to us as tokens, by the other side. Am I doing much more than echoing the 1979 commencement address by Adrienne Rich, during which people supposedly walked out from the audience as she warned women of color not to accept tokenization? I believe that hers is a position that is as pertinent today as it was nearly forty years ago.

I think we should write resisting what amounts to a call for identity claims—all but the claim to the dominant place, class, and gender. I was amused by a request from the French journal *Philosophie* to comment on a remark by Daniel Dennett in *The Guardian*:

Maybe people will now begin to realise that philosophers aren't quite so innocuous after all. Sometimes, views can have terrifying consequences that might actually come true. *I think what the postmodernists did was truly evil. They are responsible for the intellectual fad that made it respectable to be cynical about truth and facts.*

(qtd. in Cadwalladr; my emphasis)

It was spoken from that identity that does not need to be claimed or described as such and that can decide that one's own disciplinary turf is “the world.” This global version of the unclaimed North—oligarchic ideology (often unwitting yet resentful and therefore more harmful) of the dominant class, race, gender—is the unclaimed identity that crawls across all and makes us produce the global South. This is often and also a justified but unacknowledgeable response to the tendency of the class-continuous identitarians to essentialize the precolonial period, provoking in the breast-beating dominant the playing of cultural relativist games that exacerbate the ire of ideological oligarchs like Dennett.

I spent three months reading the manuscript “An African Scholar,” by Francis Abiola Irele, who died on 2 July 2017. In this extraordinary book, Irele looks at African modernity rather than claims to nationalist identity, just as Gauri Lankesh, assassinated on 5 September 2017, invoked universality as the goal of people marked by caste oppression. These ways of understanding “we,” affirmative sabotage of modernity and universalism—not simply proposals of countermodernities and counteruniversals with the global South as center—may provide a way out of claims to identity in intellectual work. When we say “black lives matter,” we are correctly and passionately confronting the definition by the other side of ourselves as nothing but “black.” That important confrontation cannot reflect the reality of one's position when responsibility is claimed, as well as when rights are claimed: the double bind of democracy. Long ago, I opened an essay on responsibility with the following words: “Responsibility annuls the call to which it seeks to respond by necessarily changing it to the calculations of answerability” (58). Today, writing more simply, I would say that responsibility is so to go toward the other that a response comes forth, rather than an expected echo that will then be rewarded.

To acknowledge this responsibility, our definition of the global South ignores the largest sectors of the electorate in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, below the radar of nongovernmental organizations and below the class apartheid in education. The terms *global* and *South* must be shaken up in different ways—recognizing that empiricism is without guarantees. The day before I wrote this piece, I would not have included this ignoring in the program of subaltern studies. But on that day I reread, after many years, the introduction to the first volume of *Subaltern Studies*, for a class on postcolonialism and pan-Africanism. I was quite startled to notice that caste is nowhere mentioned; rather, *the subaltern* is defined as “the people” (Guha). I now understand why Yashadatta Alone claims that to concentrate on the subaltern is to concentrate only on class and not on caste at all. In Antonio Gramsci’s writings, the subaltern is not, of course, a class but social groups on the fringes of history (52). The subaltern is not generalizable. And this is the biggest blow to our desire to generalize the recipient for our enunciation’s utterances, as reflected in the definition of the global South.

At a recent conference in Durban on disrupting the curriculum, Margaret Daymond, a fellow member of the 1991 New Nation Conference of writers called by the African National Congress, asked me if there should be general textbooks to be shared by the entire South African state. I have been involved in curricular matters in South Africa for some time, and I said yes, but I also said that humanities texts should not be generalized; rather, they should be suited to the class or language context. Margaret and I, bare acquaintances, have shared history. Our public exchange allows me to segue into the flip side.

## II. Deconstructing a Sender

I have so far considered how we construct the presumed subject/object as recipient for our

utterances in general these days. I will now consider how we might construct ourselves as senders: as subjects of digital humanities or global humanities. My feeling is—would you believe this is to echo Derrida’s *De la grammatologie*, written fifty-odd years ago?—that we do little more than save intellectual labor for old-fashioned research, think of the globe as “they are just like us” rather than probe the difficulty of imagining “we are just like them,” and pretend to be tremendously amateur statisticians when we go “global” (15–41).

Look how Du Bois stages that difficulty—indeed, that near impossibility—in a book written over eighty years ago. On page 87 of *Black Reconstruction*, in the chapter “The Coming of the Lord,” the text offers us an unclaimed declarative, what rhetorically looks like an open bit of free indirect discourse describing emancipation: “It was the Coming of the Lord.” On page 121, Du Bois stages an attempt to claim the subject of that bit of free indirect discourse: “[C]an we imagine this spectacular revolution? Not, of course, unless we think of these people as human beings like ourselves in a position where we are chattels and real estate, and then suddenly in the night become ‘thenceforward and forever free.’” Notice the delicate move from “they are like us” to “we are like them.” The next few pages describe the effort rather than stage a success. The impossibility is given:

Suppose on some gray day, as you plod down Wall Street, you should see God sitting on the Treasury steps, in His Glory, with the thunders curved about him? Suppose on Michigan Avenue, between the lakes and hills of stone, and in the midst of hastening automobiles and jostling crowds, suddenly you see living and walking toward you, the Christ, with sorrow and sunshine in his face. Foolish talk . . . (123–24)

I cannot go any further than this in a piece supposedly devoted to how “we” write, not to how a master wrote in the twentieth

century (I have developed this in my forthcoming book on Du Bois). Also, we are discussing being digital global, so commenting on the bad gendering inaugurating the entire book would be beyond our scope here. I move, then, to a somewhat different theater. I ask the reader to shift the membership to a “we” somewhat different from the membership of the Modern Language Association of America, though there is no reason why the entire association could not be a part of the other “we” as well. As has been my way for the last few decades, I will attempt to propose a solution to the problem, in this case the problem of constructing a monolithic global South, recipient subject, even as we construct ourselves as global digital subjects as senders, not necessarily always coordinating sender and receiver.

Thus equipped, we try the old deconstructive method: we do not accuse the digital of being artificial, as opposed to the naturalness of the human. This is a precritical view of the human that will not take us far. But we also will not excuse the digital as simply allowing a natural network to make possible a communication between fully cognizant subjects. We relocate the moment of transgression in the global digital—namely some version of a desire to create a level playing field—and turn that around to use it, attending to the various reminders that we have given ourselves. How can the global be made to work for the ungeneralizable subaltern?

I am going to give an African example because that is the one I know. Different answers to this question can be found in terms of the textuality of different situations, different (old) histories and (new) geographies.

Many first languages in Africa were not systematized by the missionaries. These are in use today, by underclass communities but also by highly educated folks, because of the appeal of the mother tongue, and by electoral candidates, who campaign in these languages and maybe provoke ethnic violence, typically

before elections. There is tremendous dialectal continuity between these languages, and when there is not, there is an enviable level of multilingualism among adjacent subaltern communities. Our concern here is how we write. These communities write on the memory, and, you can say, only half-fancifully, they practice a prescientific digitization. In other words, the lessons of nineteenth- and twentieth-century linguistics—stabilizing the language by giving it a name; putting it in a box separating it from other languages; grammatizing; establishing orthography, vocabulary, and script, among other things; maybe establishing a historical moment—become symptomatic when confronted with these languages. These lessons depend on a limited concept of writing, whereas writing on memory as these unsystematized first languages do, creates a stream that today’s digitization has exponentially enhanced.

Understandably, then, a certain vanguard of the discipline of linguistics is now investigating the ways in which these languages were taught or absorbed in the context of prevailing multilingualism. It should be mentioned that we are not speaking of languages that are going extinct and that many institutions are seeking to document and preserve. These attempts are altogether admirable, but they are not identical with the work that I am describing.

Now, suppose we acknowledge that the business of sustainable underdevelopment is today the greatest barrier to the creation of a level playing field. Much of the failure of this process, even when well-intentioned, is due to the lack of the sort of responsibility discussed above, a responsibility enhanced by the teaching of literature as the cultivation of an imagination that can flex into another’s space. It is not possible for the development lobby today to attend upon those who are to be developed—inserted into the circuit of capital without adequate subject formation—so that their desires can be rearranged into wanting the possibility of development in mind and

body, regulated by themselves. We assume, however, that among development workers there are some who really do wish to touch the ones who are being developed.

Let us remind ourselves that the humanities are worldly, not global. Let us also remind ourselves that this distinction obliges the humanities to work through collectivities, not only through global networks (even as we also remember that this is a taxonomy, not a binary opposition). We further remind ourselves that we draw a response from the other—act “response-ibility”—through language. And finally, on this list of self-reminders, let us remind ourselves that the subaltern, on the fringes of history, located in language, is not generalizable. Although this is not usually the case, we can indeed find sincere people among health workers and agricultural workers. Typically, job descriptions for development workers do not include language requirements. And, also typically, the best-intentioned development workers may learn a well-established lingua franca such as Kiswahili or IsiZulu and feel that they are preparing themselves, unaware that to those who customarily use the unsystematized first languages, these lingua francas are themselves also languages of power.

Some of us are trying to push for the establishment of a language requirement in the development job descriptions and for the creation of simple on-the-field techniques for those few well-meaning development workers to learn the unsystematized first languages of those who are being developed and thus to put digitization into the service of the continuous and persistent destruction of subalternity and pass agency to the subaltern.

“How do we write now?” then transforms into “How do we learn how to write on memory, from before different styles of what we recognize as writing developed?” We will not undo that magnificent tradition of writing, on material substance with material sub-

stance. But if it can be held within memory writing, the unrestricted phenomenology of writing might allow us to learn—if we are prepared for it—the gift of responsibility as extended to the ungeneralizable. Harnessing the literary skill of learning from the singular and the unverifiable, hanging out in textual space with the help of digital inscription as instrument rather than a relentless organizer of everyday life, then . . .

Then? Do I think everything will change? Only if I were silly enough to think that the reader of this essay can be dragged into being the writer of that other deconstruction. Prove me wrong, someone.

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The Way We Teach  
Writing Now: The  
Secondary School  
Perspective

CLASS SIZE AND TEACHING LOAD, HIERARCHICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL, MANDATES FROM FEDERAL AND STATE government as well as school districts and principals, the socioeconomic status of communities in which schools are located, required external assessments, student and faculty retention rates, and literacy levels of English language learners all shape the way writing is taught in secondary school.

Depending on how much funding their district receives, secondary school teachers can face as many as forty-five students in each of five classes per day, and teachers' material conditions vary widely. In urban schools, where most public school children in the United States are educated, teachers often lack even basic supplies like paper and books while sometimes contending with unsafe environments. Students, administrators, and teachers circulate in and out of these schools with dizzying speed. Other schools have state-of-the-art facilities and low faculty and staff turnover rates, but even teachers in these schools may face questions about the texts they assign and the writing prompts they create.

Perhaps the strongest force now buffeting secondary school English teachers is the standardized test, long a part of K-12 education but now bearing new significance. For example, in our state the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) was introduced in the early 1970s, but it had no high-stakes implications for teachers or students until the early 2000s, when MEAP scores began to be used to identify successful and not-so-successful school districts. By the time MEAP was replaced by the Michigan Merit Exam in 2007, school districts were publicly ranked (i.e., praised or shamed) according to student performance on standardized tests.

When Michigan applied for funds from Race to the Top, a United States Department of Education program launched in 2010, the state was required to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The state "withdrew" from CCSS in 2016, which in fact meant simply giving CCSS the new title Michigan Standards.

CONTRIBUTORS

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174	KEVIN ENGLISH
175	BETH SHAUM
176	SARAH ANDREW-VAUGHAN

Biographical notes about the contributors appear on page 178.

Simultaneously, the state testing program shifted grades 1–8 from Smarter Balanced (the CCSS test) to the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (MSTEP), which uses questions from the Smarter Balanced item bank. The mandated high school test became the ACT and, in 2016, the SAT. Teachers' evaluations (on which their jobs depend) are tied to student scores on these high-stakes tests. Beginning in 2018–19 student growth and assessment data will account for forty percent of annual teacher evaluations.

We rehearse these developments, not to complain, but to make visible some aspects of the contexts in which we—and secondary

school teachers in every other state—teach writing, contexts that may seem distant from college classrooms, where writing classes rarely have more than twenty-five students, the curriculum is not as subject to shifting political winds, and instructors' tenure is not linked to students' scores on high-stakes tests. In the spirit of the newly formed MLA Committee on K–16 Alliances, we hope this contribution will foster closer collaboration between secondary school and college teachers of writing. In the paragraphs that follow we step away from this unified voice to offer more specific and personal accounts of our daily work.

## Coming Full Circle

LISA EDDY

My high school offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma, but students can take the traditional four years of academic courses, enroll in vocational- or technical-education courses, or enroll at a local university while pursuing their secondary school degrees. About half of the students in my school live in poverty and qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch and breakfast. Writing is taught in grade-level English classes along with literature, and each of a teacher's five classes typically has thirty-four students. The only writing-focused course offered is a one-semester elective writing workshop.

When I began teaching here in 1994, I introduced Writer's Workshop, a class that treats each student as an author who can choose what to write, whom to write for, and why. In Writer's Workshop, the teacher is a mentor and consultant to each writer, and direct instruction is given through ten- to

fifteen-minute minilessons, in which students have the opportunity to practice the "moves" that writers make, including genre structures, rhetorical and literary devices, voice, style, grammar, mechanics, and conventions. When I told my new colleagues about my approach, one said, "We don't care what you do!"

From the late 1990s until the mid-2000s, I led Writer's Workshop three days a week and literary study two days a week. Writing projects were multigenre and multimodal and often based on field notes and interviews. For example, one student explored the idea of silence by writing about it in several genres, in prose and poetry, incorporating photos along with the structures and techniques she discovered in literary texts. I encouraged students to see authors as instructors who offered new ideas for and approaches to writing.

As time passed, the movement toward state and national standards began to ex-

ert an influence in my classroom, and I had to provide evidence that my students' work met standards in reading, writing, research, listening, and speaking. I added checklists to student portfolios to show how assignments met the standards. I required my students to incorporate more argumentation into their writing, especially in response to prompts like those on the MEAP test, then the ACT, then the SAT. I was pressured to teach more test preparation and grammar out of context and not to "waste" class time on writing that wasn't "college-and-career writing," which meant the five-paragraph argumentative essay. As I entered my second decade of teaching, I felt more and more caught between what I knew was right for students—voice, choice, time, ownership, and response, which *Writer's Workshop* allowed—and what I was required to do to raise standardized-test scores. When I talked about research that shows that teaching grammar out of context does not improve writing, I was told that teachers' jobs depended on test scores and that everyone needed to help raise those scores.

By 2012 I was able to preserve only shreds of *Writer's Workshop*, and only on special occasions could I allow my students to choose their own topics, genres, audiences, and purposes. Then, suddenly, my building was declared a "focus school" and placed under state oversight because the disparity in test scores between high- and low-achieving students was too large. Without any input from teachers, our curriculum was replaced with a standardized-testing system designed to prepare students to succeed on the Smarter Balanced assessment. State oversight and a mandate to raise test scores led the school district to replace literary study and student-centered writing with a steady diet of informational texts and standardized writing tasks

whose only purpose was to generate a score. For several years, students spent most of their time answering multiple-choice questions about excerpts from these texts and writing eight formal pieces per year—two narrative, three informative, and three argumentative—in response to previously written, unchanging prompts. During this time the only audience for their writing was made up of low-wage test scorers. I watched in horror as the joy of self-expression that my students had enjoyed for nearly two decades was crushed. When I demanded to know what research would support such dehumanization of reading and writing, I was ignored or silenced.

But I didn't give up. When a new curriculum director was hired, I began advocating for my district to adopt a curriculum designed by teachers in nearby schools, one that restored literary reading and multiple genres of writing. A district-wide committee was formed to consider the issue; it endorsed the new curriculum, and the administration adopted it. I am now teaching *Writer's Workshop* in a way that's very close to how I began in 1994. This curriculum allows writers to learn to think for themselves and to make decisions that real "college-and-career" writing requires.

Having come full circle, I am glad that, once again, my students are authentic writers and readers, not only test takers. Their writing portfolios contain varied genres, written for varied audiences and for varied purposes. While the narrowing of the curriculum and the emphasis on standardized testing in my district are extreme examples, they illustrate the kinds of pressures that teachers around the country face as a result of state and national policies. As we find our way forward, it is good to look back at where we've been, so we can choose the approach that best serves our students.

## Balancing State and Local Demands

KEVIN ENGLISH

My comprehensive high school serves 1,700 students, nearly seventy percent of whom qualify for free or reduced-cost lunches. When they graduate, our students enlist in the military or matriculate to community colleges and universities. With these myriad destinations in mind, my colleagues and I work to balance our professional knowledge about how to prepare students for the unknown writing situations they will encounter after high school with the many school, district, state, and national mandates that center on annual writing assessments.

The SAT, which every eleventh grader must now take, demands that students write an explanation of how an author “builds an argument to persuade his audience.” Students are expected to identify features (evidence, reasoning, word choice, etc.) that strengthen the argument while paying attention to the “most relevant features of the passage.” All of this must be accomplished in fifty minutes, signaling to students that “good” writing requires only one draft. While writing teachers might agree that the skills measured by the SAT are valuable, asking students to demonstrate them in fifty minutes sends the wrong message about writing processes. Further, the SAT’s Web site displays five-paragraph essays as exemplars, reaffirming this type of writing’s dominance in far too many classrooms (*Sample Questions*).

While standardized writing tests have encouraged schools to require more writing, support for writing instruction varies widely. Some schools spend professional-development dollars on writing pedagogy, while others issue broad edicts without providing professional training. This perpetuates disparity in the quality of instruction students receive.

Some teachers include meaningful, authentic writing deeply rooted in their discipline, and others assign writing to fulfill obligations. In conversations with colleagues across the state, I have heard about students in an eleventh-grade chemistry class writing about money and happiness and ninth graders in a world history class writing about texting and driving. Teachers have also told me that they have responded to the pressure of writing mandates by providing students with outlines of what to say in each paragraph. Others turn to in-class essays just to ensure that the required number of writing pieces are completed.

Despite these discouraging reports, I remain hopeful because I have collaborated with teachers who approach writing with intentionality, like an elementary school math teacher who incorporates daily reflective writing in her classroom to assess students’ deep understanding of process. I have also shared best practices with science teachers seeking guidance from their counterparts in the English department as they try to help students who struggle with inventive writing.

The way teachers assess students’ writing and provide feedback on it varies as much as writing instruction does. Some teachers work in schools that expect every student to write a substantial piece in every class in every marking period. Students in these schools may receive less feedback or less-valuable feedback than students whose teachers have the freedom to focus on quality instead of quantity. Some teachers give feedback the way that they received it in school—covering essays in red ink and circling grammatical mistakes—while others provide feedback through mini-lessons focused on problems found in the writing of several students. Teachers also as-

sess student writing in a variety of ways, from judging the quality of evidence produced in support of an argument to awarding a grade for completion. To assess writing, some teachers develop their own rubrics that incorporate discipline-specific expectations, while others turn to externally developed rubrics.

The reality is that K–12 teachers work every day to balance the needs of their students and the demands of their community, employer, state, and standardized assessments.

This complicated set of demands changes constantly, yet teachers continue to try to leverage their professional expertise to make instruction work for them and their students.

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Reflection: The Unexamined Classroom Is Not Worth Teaching

BETH SHAUM

Unlike my colleagues Kevin English and Lisa Eddy, I do not face the state- and district-imposed challenges of shifting requirements and excessive testing because I teach in a private Catholic school where there are fewer standardized tests, smaller classes, and more parental investment. My job does not depend on my students’ test scores, and CCSS does not rule. This has afforded me and my colleagues much freedom in the classroom. But while my autonomy as a teacher is greater in a private school than it would be in a more bureaucratic public school, the straight rows of desks in classrooms and the lecture-based approach to teaching found in both kinds of schools mean that this privilege is not always afforded to our students.

Although many of my Catholic-school colleagues value traditional methods over research- and process-based approaches to writing instruction, my teaching has been informed by my own quest for best practices through reflection, research, and risk taking, and as I have learned more as a teacher and a writer, I have tried to extend the same op-

portunities—to reflect, conduct research, and take risks—to my students. The dreaded “research paper” was one place where I felt unsuccessful. For almost ten years, I reflected on how unproductive and mind-numbing that project was for my students. Telling students to pick a topic that interested them, fill note cards with “reliable” sources, and develop a thesis with evidence to prove it felt like straight rows of desks, not something students could apply to their lives. I continued to reflect and research and eventually learned about the Unfamiliar-Genre Research Project, developed by Cathy Fleischer and Sarah Andrew-Vaughan, which asks students to choose a genre they have not written in before, research it, write in it, and reflect on the process—just as I reflect on my work as a teacher and learner.

As my eighth graders and I jumped head-first into this project, I immediately saw how much more personally invested they were in this than in past research projects. Students picked a genre they knew little about and, with guidance from me, essentially taught

themselves how to write in it. At the end of this project, students overwhelmingly felt that it was challenging but worthwhile because they could use what they learned from it outside the classroom walls. One eighth grader wrote in her final reflection:

Overall, this project seemed to be quite a success for me. Not only did I learn about myself as a writer but I also learned about education in a new way. Most of the time teachers will have us take notes on what they tell us but through this project we learned how to educate ourselves with what we were able to learn on our own. This also brings out our ability to think for ourselves instead of being dependent on someone else.

Reflection on my own practice as a teacher helped me find and risk trying to provide my students with the kind of learning they see as valuable even when it's hard. This classroom success would have been impossible without opportunities for me to reflect, participate in professional development, and do research, all ways of enriching the writing and learning process for me and my stu-

dents. Not only does reflection help students to "think for [them]selves instead of being dependent on someone else," it also helps them assess what they have learned and not learned, so that when the next hurdle faces them they can jump over it rather than wait for someone to remove it from their path.

As I continue to teach in an environment that allows me to take risks, make mistakes, reflect, and try to do better next time, straight rows of desks, grammar textbooks, and five-paragraph essays still rule most of the classrooms in my school. But at least the students in my class enjoy the same opportunities I do, so I'll just continue to live by example and leave my classroom door open for anyone who wishes to come inside and learn something new.

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## Professional Development for Writing Teachers

SARAH ANDREW-VAUGHAN

As Beth Shaum shows, good teaching means continued learning, and this is especially true for writing teachers because, despite attention to writing on high-stakes tests, most English teachers are not required to take a course on the teaching of writing in their professional training. Many English teachers step into the classroom having taken only first-year composition and one other writing course. Furthermore, when Michigan teachers, like teachers

in most states, renew their certificates, they are required to take a course in teaching reading but not one in writing instruction.

This means many teachers learn about writing instruction "on the job." School districts in Michigan are required to offer teachers thirty hours of professional development per year, and these credits may be applied toward renewal of teaching certificates. An English teacher for eighteen years, I now plan

professional development for approximately one hundred secondary school English teachers across three comprehensive high schools, two alternative high schools, five middle schools, and two K–8 schools, so I think a lot about what it takes to teach writing.

It can be overwhelming to consider everything writing teachers need to know. They need a background in literature, grammar, vocabulary development, reading, writing, and rhetorical strategies. Because testing is so prominent in the state, writing teachers in Michigan also need to know how writing is assessed on high-stakes tests and how our students fare on these tests, so teaching can address student needs. Unfortunately, teachers don't get a lot of useful information about the students they are currently teaching, since tests are given in the spring and results aren't available until after the end of the school year.

Of course, knowing is not the same as doing, so I try to create opportunities for teachers to practice the activities (like genre study) that they will have students undertake in their classrooms, because all teachers need to be able to experience writing themselves in order to create meaningful writing experiences for students. Professional-development sessions move through a series of instructional phases—modeling, guided practice, and independent practice; teachers learn how to take their students through these phases in the classroom because it helps students learn.

The many things teachers need to consider, know, and be able to do are impossible to pack into thirty hours of professional learning. So I have to ask, what should be the goal of our limited time together? I propose that

what we explore is not as important as the act of exploring itself. Just as we want our students to grapple with challenging ideas, we need to ask and seek answers to questions like What is voice? and How do you create an introduction that will grab the attention of your readers?

In professional development, I strive to create a community of learners in workshops that allow us to inquire and explore; we engage in discussions that dig into meaningful topics, and we challenge one another to support our claims with evidence. We think about how reading and writing are interconnected and about how we can help students know what we know. Most of all, I try to create an environment where teachers can feel safe, just as students should feel in a writing classroom.

In a recent professional-development session, I focused on ways that writing teachers can help students understand conventions that they consistently find difficult—including grammar problems that show up in SAT questions involving sentence structure. As a group we analyzed how changing the sentence structure of captions can change the interpretation of images. After the session ended, a well-regarded, experienced teacher shared that she had come to a new understanding of when and how to use commas and that she recognized that she would be looking at her own writing differently. Of course I was glad the content of the session had been helpful to this teacher, but I was even more delighted that she found the session a safe place where she could acknowledge her own limitations. I am hopeful that she and her colleagues will provide the same kinds of safe spaces for their student writers.

CONTRIBUTORS

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# Why Writing Productively Is So Difficult, and What You Can Do about It

GINA HIATT

I AM A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST WHO CONDUCTED A THRIVING PRIVATE PRACTICE FOR OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. AT SOME POINT, HOWEVER, I tired of focusing on deep-seated problems and longed to help people make tangible, external changes in their lives.

I began coaching thirteen years ago and luckily started with academics. Here were intelligent and articulate people struggling to finish their articles and books, miserable because they found writing productively to be so difficult. I noted their sense of isolation and their need for external accountability. These observations led me to create an online coaching and accountability service for academic writers who want to become more creative and productive.

Because I'm independent of any educational institution, I have been able to learn a lot about what makes writing particularly difficult in academic settings. My hope is that academic writers who feel guilty about not writing enough will understand that theirs is a common problem and that there are solutions available. Perhaps my outsider's point of view will play some small role in moving a few graduate programs, faculty development centers, and provost offices to help their academics become more creative and productive writers.

This article is not written in a scholarly format. I'm writing in the first person and giving my observations. There is no formal research involved; my opinions result from observing how thousands of scholars who were struggling to become productive writers learned new habits and succeeded. I've been able to work with these scholars individually and in group coaching sessions, as well as through my Web site. My work gives me a unique, behind-the-scenes perspective on the issues that academics deal with when they write.

## Why Is Scholarly Writing So Difficult for So Many?

Several factors besides the advanced subject matter may prevent an academic from becoming a prolific writer. Most undergraduates or graduate students just starting out do not work on long-term writing

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projects without external deadlines.<sup>1</sup> Writing without external deadlines is completely unlike writing a ten-page term paper due next Wednesday; that paper could probably be pounded out on Tuesday night. But writing “binges” as Robert Boice calls them (39), don’t work for writing a book. Or they work suboptimally. It would be foolish to wake up the week before a book or scholarly article is due to the publisher and work for seven days without sleeping and expect to produce anything worth submitting.

The much lower level of accountability that faculty members experience leads them to flounder. Those who are lucky enough to have been born knowing the secrets of writing without structure can forge ahead, but many are left behind. There are few time constraints and almost no structure associated with most professional, scholarly writing. As a matter of fact, it’s common for professors to contact me for help during their sabbaticals, when they have the least amount of structure.

New professors are overwhelmed in their first years, prepping and teaching courses, learning their way around, getting involved in service, and navigating departmental politics and meetings. All these responsibilities are scheduled, and others will notice if the individual doesn’t show up. So these important, urgent tasks have the much-needed time constraints that force faculty members to produce. But by pleasing others in the short term, professional academics find that over time they have placed their own work at the back of the queue.

There are different stressors mid-career, when faculty members are asked to spend more time as administrators or to run time-consuming committees. The relief of getting tenure often carries with it the expectation of taking one’s research in a new direction. For some, it’s difficult to jump-start their writing during this period.

When I started working with academics I was shocked to discover the astonishingly

unkind and cutting remarks that they write to each other. The lack of civility in their comments has a disturbing impact on the receiver. I’ve met so many academics who have been traumatized and hurt by them; overwhelmingly negative criticism drains them of the ability to write.

In reaching tenure decisions, tenure committee members usually weight research publication rate the same as, and often more heavily than, teaching ability. Yet there is significantly more support for teaching than for productive writing in most institutions. It’s certainly possible to help faculty members become creative, productive writers. So why is there disparity in training? It’s a situation that has harmed many academics who desperately need help with their writing.

For some reason, there is less judgment about getting help with one’s teaching than there is about getting help with writer’s block. Many academics looking for writing help want to remain anonymous. But it’s hard for a university to maintain writers’ anonymity if that very university runs the program offered to help its faculty. An outside agency can provide anonymous help that will feel safer.

When we consider why productive writing in academia is so difficult, we need to consider a factor that is often ignored or discounted: anxiety. Anxiety is the fundamental cause of most cases of writer’s block in academia. Anxiety is common in any high-level profession filled with intelligent people who know what they are capable of achieving. But it is particularly rampant in academia. I’m convinced that anxiety is at the root of what prevents many academics from becoming productive writers.

Before becoming an academic coach, I had a private practice in McLean, Virginia, down the street from the CIA. My patients were all from either corporate environments or the CIA (I had a special clearance). The average person would imagine that people who work at the CIA are more anxious than most.

Perhaps readers of this essay will not be surprised to hear that anxiety is more prevalent in academia than in other environments.

Why does anxiety level matter? Readers may remember learning in Psych 101 that there is an inverted, U-shaped curve for anxiety. The curve illustrates that it's not good to have no anxiety and that it's not good to have too much anxiety. A person can be not anxious enough—too laid back to bother functioning well, if at all. Someone who is not nervous enough will ignore the warning signals indicating that something needs to be done. At the middle of the curve is the optimal level of anxiety, where the individual is aware of what needs to be done and is ideally motivated and capable of achieving it.

Then there is the level of anxiety at which a person is so incapacitated that it's difficult to think clearly. Tasks that have any level of complexity can appear overwhelming, and defense mechanisms quickly kick in to lower the anxiety level. When it comes to scholarly writing, one of the most common defensive behaviors is to procrastinate. That's easy to do in an academic environment when class preparation, teaching, office hours, meetings, and service also demand attention. Procrastination is so handy that writers don't even know they're doing it until it's too late.

Procrastination may feel like forgetting. For example, for months I "forgot" that this essay was due. I then spent several days "getting myself ready" to write it. And then, as my anxiety built, I just plain old avoided it.

Luckily I follow at least some of the precepts I teach. Soon after learning that I would be writing this essay, I made detailed lists of ideas, read and reread the information that was provided, and ended up with several pretty good pages of material. It was easy for me to do those things when my anxiety level was relatively low.

Most of the professors I've worked with have gone through a similar process of forgetting, procrastination, and avoidance, but

on a much bigger scale. And their denial of reality carries a much bigger penalty than an isolated act of procrastination. Often they have done little writing or publishing while putting their heart and soul into the rest of their career. Then one morning they wake up with a start and realize that if they don't start writing they are not going to achieve their professional goals, such as getting a job, tenure, a grant, or a promotion. By the time they seek my help, their anxiety is out of control; usually they are almost incapable of writing.

### What Can Scholars Do to Write More Productively?

Starting with the first day at work, new professors should remember that writing is a long-term project and must be treated like one. Despite the overwhelming number of new responsibilities, I recommend they start early on a writing project. They may be tired from completing the dissertation, but they should start anyway. The key is to work in short writing sessions. This may sound counterintuitive. Most people think that you need big chunks of time to do great work. Many have said to me, "But I need time just to warm up and remember what I last worked on. Then I need to plan what to work on next and stare at the screen while I think of what to say."

In fact, research has shown that professors who write in short sessions, whether they naturally work that way or were taught and coached to work that way, write and publish more articles, receive tenure at a higher rate, and report more creative thoughts than professors who take a different approach to their writing (Boice 143–44). It makes sense that actively thinking about your work (by writing) is more powerful than "just" thinking. For one thing, it's hard to concentrate on abstract topics for a long period of time. By writing, you are forcing yourself to focus, and in a sense you are illuminating neural pathways in your brain. By stopping your writing

session before you burn out and then waiting one day before continuing to write, you allow those neurons the time to seek new connections. The result is that in the middle of your shower or while driving home you are surprised to discover that you have an amazing new idea that ties your argument together.

In my workshops I show images of brains to illustrate how the right hemisphere is the place that ideas come from; but these ideas have no words. The left hemisphere, being critical, analytic, and able to digest only one word at a time (as in talking and writing), finds it difficult to translate the seemingly incoherent ideas of the right hemisphere into language. The thoughts come out sounding like poor echoes of finished work you have submitted in the past. The left hemisphere wants to reject these sentences. And if you try to improve them, you get caught in the trap of perfectionism. It's much better to write as if everything you're working on is a rough draft. You will be able to perfect your work in later writing sessions as the ideas become clearer. Right now just jump-start the neural pathways.

From a practical standpoint, consider how few large chunks of time you have during a week. If anything should stop you from using those infrequent time slots, you will end up doing no writing at all. It is very difficult to pick up writing that you haven't looked at in over a week. So a long writing session is hard to find time for, hard to start, and exhausting to finish. Even if you are happy with what you achieve, you'll find yourself avoiding working like that for quite some time. That's why short writing sessions work so well. You can only get a few of your brilliant ideas out at a time, no matter how long the session; the shorter sessions lead to greater ease, creativity, and flow in writing; and it's much easier to find fifteen to forty-five minutes in a busy day than it is to find five hours. But the best reason for shorter, focused sessions is that you will enjoy the writing process more, which will make you feel more connected to your work.

Experiment to find the length of time that works best for you. Schedule your writing time. You may be surprised at how many pockets of time there are in your day. Plan ahead and write the time in your calendar. Start writing at your planned time, whether or not you feel inspired, have any idea what you're going to write, or are in the mood. To help yourself get going, set a timer. Start writing when the timer starts, keep writing (and avoid getting distracted) while the timer is on, and stop when time is up. During this period you won't research, check on anything, create citations, or do anything that isn't producing your own writing. (Although you can, of course, make notes on what you will do later.) This precious writing time is for you to find out what you are thinking.

If you do this daily, you will find it much easier to start writing, you'll notice more creative thoughts during the day, you'll enjoy your writing more, and you'll end up writing more. There may be days when you feel like taking more time to write, and it is fine to do so as long as you don't allow yourself to get burned out.

Whenever you write, think of your writing output as a draft that is in a continual process of getting refined. This means that you can leave it quite rough without smoothing the edges for a long while. The less you approach writing in a perfectionistic way, the better your writing will be in the long run.

Accountability is key in helping you keep up this kind of habit. As long as your life is going well, you may not think you need it. But being accountable to others will help you get through the rough spots where your motivation may wane. Similarly, guidance and support at crucial times will help you stay on your path or correct course as needed.

### Why Hasn't the Academy Done More to Help Scholars Become More Prolific Writers?

It makes sense that academic institutions would put money and resources into help-

ing their scholars write and research productively and creatively. A lot of effort, time, and money is put into hiring and acculturating each faculty member. It's a sad loss if a faculty member who is well liked in a role as teacher, mentor, committee member, or administrator doesn't get tenure because of an inadequate publication record.

Some universities provide a dedicated writing space, usually reserved for once-a-week sessions. Or they might offer boot camps in which participants do intense writing in a limited time frame. A boot camp provides the comfort and motivation of writing with a group of peers and helps participants realize that they *can* write productively when they schedule their writing. These two methods may be counterproductive, however, because they send a message that it's fine to postpone writing until a big chunk of time is available.

Another option is to have a speaker give a seminar or a workshop to teach the sometimes counterintuitive precepts of productive writing. Departments, faculty development centers, or provost's offices can help, by providing basic instruction for avoiding years of procrastination. If an institution doesn't provide this kind of learning, it may be available in a bookstore or online. My own Web site, the *Academic Writing Club*, provides most of what you need to develop and maintain a productive writing habit. Sometimes departments or grants can cover the cost of this kind of writing help.

This information is valuable, but it's just a first step. Over the years I have found that professors need almost daily support to develop and continue these new habits. Instruction alone won't instill a habit or support writers when they're highly anxious or avoidant.

I've noticed that many academics adhere to outdated and possibly misogynist viewpoints about writers and the academy in general. Sadly, newer generations of academics have absorbed some of this

thinking and apply it to themselves in a self-flagellating sort of way. One outdated belief is "Either you've got it or you don't." While most academics would admit, if asked, that this is a silly belief, they still act as if it were true: "If you were not born knowing how to be a prolific writer, then maybe you don't belong here in the first place." Why bother helping faculty members who just don't have what it takes?

Another prevalent attitude is "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." In other words, there is no place here for weaklings who get worried and anxious or who are traumatized by vicious criticism of their work, bullying, and lack of support when they are struggling to write. This attitude engenders a sense of shame among academics who are unhappy with their writing. I'd estimate that about eighty percent of the thousands of academics who've joined my membership site select to be anonymous. My site employs accountability methods that have been used by companies who serve many other types of clients. Yet it's relatively rare in nonacademic settings for people to choose anonymity when they are getting help being more productive. In other words, academics feel shame that they are not writing more, because of the academic environment of shaming and judging.

The last belief that I'll mention is "Only the fittest survive." Unfortunately, Darwinian thinking about academia doesn't lead to the most intelligent, creative, and collegial people becoming tenured. Those who survive were lucky to have been in supportive academic environments; came from a family that acculturated them to the idea of graduate school and "the life of the mind"; didn't have to work full time or commute from far away in graduate school; had family to support them; didn't belong to a marginalized race or group; were thick-skinned and immune to vitriolic critiques and judgmental, competitive colleagues; had a dissertation

adviser who taught them how to write productively; and knew how to seek out mentoring when needed.

These outdated beliefs contribute to an environment that leads to isolation. The sense of isolation is increased when academics run into difficulty while writing. Because they fear being judged, they don't tell others what they are going through. This silence leads to a feeling that they are the only ones suffering, when in fact several people sitting near one another at the last departmental meeting are all secretly worried or ashamed of their poor publication rate.

Particularly in the humanities, academics tend to be secretive and worry about their ideas being stolen. They work largely in isolation because individual publications are prized in the humanities and will help determine whether someone gets tenure. In the sciences, the need for large groups to work on grant-funded projects builds collegiality and accountability into the processes of writing and creative thinking. There is certainly some competition for the role of first author, but at least science, with its need for collaboration, provides a better setting in which to nurture productive writers.

As an ancient and august institution, academia is slow to change. The schedule of the modern professor is much busier than it was fifty years ago, and there is significantly less support per professor, but the expectations and incorrect beliefs about writing are similar to what they were at that time.

### What Can Academics Do to Promote a Writer-Friendly Atmosphere on Campus?

A writer-friendly atmosphere does not mean that everyone is always smiling. It means that there is open communication about the difficulties of writing, that it is acceptable to ask for mentoring or for help with writing, and that it's OK to feel anxious about writing.

I wouldn't wait around for this magic transformation to take place. The only way it can start is with you. Go boldly out and talk about your difficulties with writing. Invite others to discuss this issue. Suggest to someone that you write together in a coffee shop. Create your own writing corner. Ask your department to bring in a speaker or to find the funds for some faculty members to get coaching or to join an online service that promotes writing productivity.

When you're in a position of power, maybe you will be the one to suggest that it's time to reexamine tenure norms and to encourage joint publication in the humanities. After all, while teachers are urging their undergraduates to work in groups because it's the wave of the future, humanities professors continue to struggle alone. Wouldn't publications in the humanities become richer and more refined if cross-disciplinary or intra-disciplinary work was rewarded?

Be active in teaching all graduate students and faculty members the basic tenets of writing productively. Promote the idea that writing is not always easy and that there is no shame in getting help with writing productively. Do this by creating a nonjudgmental, noncompetitive atmosphere: remember that anxiety is the cause of most writing-productivity problems. The more supportive the environment, the more creative and productive everyone will be.

Seek coaching and support for the process of writing. Sometimes the most creative and original thinkers need help maintaining a regular, consistent writing schedule. There are many academic writing coaches available online.

Find a stable place that you can always go back to. On my Web site, I've had many people stay for years, and many more who leave and come back (after all, it's a paid site). There are so many times in an academic's career when it feels like the well has dried and writing comes to a halt. Knowing that there is

a safe place to go to jump-start one’s writing can make all the difference.

Getting support to become a creative and prolific writer doesn’t have to be expensive or time-consuming. New writing spaces, intense mentoring, or months of being taught how to write productively aren’t necessary. More important than those things is having ongoing and long-term support so that scholars can maintain their writing through the ups and downs of an academic year and an academic career.

Academics can learn the techniques of creative and productive writing, find the support they need in their institution or outside its walls, and contribute to an environment

that is positive and that supports writers. Those who are happy with their writing and research will be much more content with their career.

NOTE

1. Although the dissertation is a long-term writing project without short-term deadlines, some academics have structures in place to help them in graduate school, like attentive advisers or writing groups for graduate students.

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## theories and methodologies

### Writing, Life

KATHLEEN STEWART

ONCE, I NEEDED THE PERFECT TIME AND PLACE TO WRITE. I STOOD IN MY OWN WAY, AFFECTING THE DANGERS OF WORLDS AND AUDIENCES.

It was as if to write was to write a poison-pen letter to myself and everything else. Then, slowly, under the velocities of worldly pressures, I learned to write in my own skin, like it or not. Making money, making dinner, taking care of things, having problems, having encounters, having a body, getting into swimming, or Deleuze, or fish tacos, or the habit of gazing at houses online, I ended up with a writer's life. I learned to write in thirty-minute intervals on my frail mother's dining-room table, my three-year-old playing with the remnants of old plastic toys underfoot. I took notes on my phone at a doctor's office. I started the day by writing in bed, even when I only had ten minutes. The matters of life became the matters of words. In writing, life, frictions scrape across the surfaces of both registers, pulling them into lines of form and force. Freightened and propelled, writing knots up on what crosses its path in a bit of social chaos or in a back turned on someone. Like a readiness in need of a start, it feels out what's happening or waits for the recomposition of a tendon snapping back.

Writers interviewed say you just do it every day. I think that's a little tongue in cheek and what they mean is something like this: a writer first composes the fiction of a world of writing and then turns it into a routine of the self. They say you write *x* hours a day and the rest of the day is just filler; you go for coffee, you give a lecture, you do e-mail, you take a walk, you stare out that window. You stop being the thing that stops you by becoming the scene of a writing muscle's interval training; you write, then it's recuperative downtime so you can write again. You become singular and on point, opening yourself to writing's imperial promise and demand.

I would put it a little differently. Maybe something like this: if you let it, writing pushes everything (writer in tow) into an energetic state. It starts as a jumping-off point on the lookout for something suggestive. Then it magnetizes attributes and trajectories. It wraps the concept in atmospherics. Capacities poise in its objects. Thought

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becomes a thing surprised to find itself in the middle of something. Bodies, dreams, rhetorics, laws, forms of racism or sexism, or the tenderness barely beating in a way of life, or the buoyant or unbearable conditions of a life become multidimensional, weirdly agential, and overtly, maybe even overly, present to the you who is in a state of readiness for it. It's as if everything becomes prismatic, angled, composed of shards that can harden into nodes of condensation or shift modes or seasons without warning.

The writer tries to keep up with what's already happening. Some people have long, lean writing muscles; mine are shortened and taut, like a repetitive stress injury turned into a personal tendency. I can write anywhere now but not for long and it's only in the morning that I have that kind of energy and interest. Things are usually in my way, but that's the thing with writing for me. It's an arc sparking in the noise and also a way of breathing into the noise, its highest pleasure like a deep breath exhaled. As a labor of being, writing needs materials. Leaning into a world already populated by prolific, hardworking compositions, it fastens onto the tendons of a scene or the interruption of a rhythm. The act of writing saturates itself in a variegated poesis already charged with experiments of form and matter. It's a sensitivity cocreating with termites and claws, snuggles and walks, death and car trouble and a certain look.

For me, as I have said, writing happened under worldly pressure. It became my self-declared job to describe the legibilities that things in contact yield, to notice a habit forming up or the sudden cohesion of a milieu. I would drag whatever worldly compositions I'd light upon into a catchment area, a teeming pond of possibilities, an occasional water bug skimming its surface. Its saturated act induced ordinary speculation out of the noise of kids, marijuana, dancing, driving, other people's addictions, and all the things that happen in meetings.

Writing makes things feel full—at once actual and potential. What matters to writing is the swell of an overfilled form or the way something becomes perceptible and muffles other things. Working with words is like feeling out the pitch of a note made by an imaginary tuning fork. When writing fails, it spins out like a car in loose sand, leaving you stranded and itchy. When it works, it ricochets off subjects and objects in a connection like a spark or a membrane.

Over time things happen to a writing, life. For me, writing became necessarily recursive. Every day I started at the beginning, chiseling at things that were neither here nor there. I came to listen, primarily, for the sound and rhythm of the words. I became impatient with the shorthand that reduced the precise singularities of things to exempla of ideas claiming transcendence. I became allergic to the long-winded and roundabout: the arguments, the anxious attempts to circle around a thing instead of trying to get it. I was after some precision of skill or timing in the billowing folds of things, some iterability, some expressivity in ordinary things. My questions got more and more basic, and they were not about meaning, causality, or right and wrong but, What is it? What's it doing now? I wanted to keep going, to complete the thought of a tendency or the shade of an opening.

Sometimes people who know something, viscerally, about the subject of something I'm writing will accuse me of letting out secrets, of writing down things that people living through them recognize and know in certain ways but only to an extent and don't talk about. In a stronger version of this, an aunt once leaned into me and said, not kindly, "You better not be writing about the family." Some academics object to the way I mix composition and theory because they like their fiction on the side or they want to know what they're reading when it comes to academic prose. Even though I care a lot about reactions to my writing, I'm *with* the writing.

Writing, now, we might find ourselves caught up in something we're composing, like music or a conversation that's taken hold. Right now, we're decades into the mean, lean neoliberal policies that blew up inequality like a balloon and turned class and race into castes and normative gender into a hollowed-out horror show. The social is under so much pressure it has an attitude problem about its own existence, and in more and more ordinary situations people find the existence of others unbearable. Yet the engine of the everyday now is a sheer inquiry into what others are doing and what they know. "How'd you get into *that*?" "What *is* that?" Surprise flourishes now not just because of all the conspiracies and occluded zones but because things hit at such a specific angle, already in precise form, that they activate a noticing competency and the impulse to be *in* what you didn't even know existed until just now. You can be contaminated by a pause or a tic in your mood. Social-aesthetic-material fragments are languishing all around, ungathered by logics of politics, of meaning, or of blame.

Writing, now, is like catching your breath. A time-out scanning the surface of what's going on for a place to begin. Words touch bodies and things, light on what might unfold, nudge a line of composition for good or bad. It's prolific, multimodal, a matter of timing or tone, consequential and laboring. How did the hipster hat become a thing? How exactly did it happen that a city's bus drivers suddenly refused to make stops in a poor black neighborhood or that a gang of white middle school boys in a liberal town in New England decided to be bad at the start of summer vacation by chanting "white power" from the raft on the lake? When did teenagers start living off DIY YouTube videos to see how to bake things, make things, do their nails? How did they come to think that *this* is how you enter the world or that this is world enough for them?

## NOTE

Below is a list of some of the things I was thinking with as I was writing.

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Dead Forms; or, A  
Defense of Good,  
Old-Fashioned  
Scholarly Writing

CONTRIBUTORS

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tors appear on page 198.

Introduction

The university, an eldritch progeny of medieval Christianity and conglomerate capitalism,<sup>1</sup> can feel like a gristmill to graduate students and junior scholars. We must produce acceptable articles and monographs after years of research. We must compete for a few good jobs, and we do this by teaching extra classes, submitting essays for publication, presenting papers at conferences. But we must also be beyond this world, needing neither food nor money, subsisting solely on ideas and conversation and self-promotion. The authors of these essays, all of us at the beginning of our careers as scholars, are not fooled by a system that masks its cold corporatist heart with the vestments of the liberal arts. We know that the university intends to make of our bodies machines that produce ideas and disseminate them; machines that round off the rough edges of our students and prepare them to be good, centrist, white-collar workers; machines that perpetuate the idea of the university. We know that we are disposable within the structure of the academy. Nevertheless, we are clear-eyed as we try to make a living in the knowledge industry. We believe, earnestly, that critique and research and thought experiments and the slow study of minutiae are worth fighting for.

In this fight we resurrect scholarly writing practices that stand against the commodification of knowledge and the fetishization of technological platforms. Like any other corporation, the university rewards speed, production, and uniformity. Like any other corporation, the university reckons the worth of its departments and human capital by quotas and outcome charts and cash flows. The university lusts after trends like the digital humanities, which gives its administrators a particularly Silicon Valley tingle, the relief of feeling relevant. Instead of speed, we value the transformative power of slow thinking and writing. Instead of finished, consumable products, we value the process of discovery. We are open to wonder and revision, to the unfolding of truths through a deep engagement with the world around us. Instead of uniformity, we experiment with dead forms of writing attuned to the specificity of material and immaterial ex-

perience and invent new forms of writing cobbled together from forms ruined by the late-capitalist academic scene: the jeremiad, the treatise, the lyric essay, the review, the state-of-the-field review, the hypothetical, the proof, the critical memoir, the ethnography, the close reading, the monograph, and even the digital project. We continue to mine the traditions of our disciplines, to disinter old ways of thinking and give them new forms.

This shared commitment to return to ways of writing that are embodied and meaningful, that reverberate beyond today, connects the four of us. We come from different disciplines. We have different scholarly agendas and theoretical orientations and writing styles. But we champion the writing of scholarship that is slow, sort of old-fashioned, and incisive. Tesla Cariani, a doctoral student in English and a filmmaker and visual studies scholar, explores how the university environment shapes scholars, especially how its capitalist agenda seeps down into the departments, staining everything from curricula to collegiality. Ashley Coleman Taylor, a religion PhD who works as an interdisciplinary ethnographer and specializes in gender and sexuality in the African diaspora, pushes for a writing practice rooted in corporeality that foregrounds her body and its marginality in a system that treats her as either a diversity trophy or an infiltrating virus. Christopher Lirette, a recent PhD who studies work and cultural identity through ethnography and experimental writing, imagines new worlds made possible by a lyric and scholarly engagement with this one and models a kind of writing that attempts to exceed its arguments. Marlo Starr, a doctoral student in English researching postcoloniality through poetry, explains the slow, rich process of discovery in writing and finds in the archive

encounters that remind us that knowledge is yet unfinished.

Each of us has attempted to write with ferocity and tenderness to produce visceral works that recenter scholarly imagination in the body, the archive, the image that shocks, the word that stings. We write to survive the world as it is, which desperately needs thoughtful critique wrought of sustained engagement. But we also write to jolt readers into engagement, to provoke conversation, to forge new possibilities in a system whose best defense is its facade of impenetrability. Our four voices, human ones, rally and rage for the strange return of evocative, scholarly writing as resistance to the way things are, in the university and out.

## NOTES

Christopher Lirette coordinated the work on the introduction.

1. For a comprehensive history of the medieval Christian origins of the university, see Ridder-Symoens; for a précis, see Rüegg. Veblen, writing in 1918, argues that the installation of “business men” on administrative boards aligns the pedagogical mission of the university with a capitalist agenda (59–84; ch. 2). See Heller for a more recent investigation of capitalism in academic institutions.

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## Framing Space

TESLA CARIANI

Often, I write when others are asleep. Sometimes I open the windows—letting the nocturnal hum of insects and amphibians enter the room. This is a year of cicadas. Their calls keep company with my own attempts at communication until, after a time, even those insistent vibrations fade into the background. My senses of space—this room and the small table at which I work—cease to become conscious considerations as the paper begins.

Perhaps it is this feeling of dislocation that nudges the sites and scenes of writing to the edges of discussion. Apart from anecdotes about scholars famous for writing in bathtubs or notorious European cafés, scholarship on the ways that workspaces affect academic writing is sparse.<sup>1</sup> Rather, details about the places in which writers write turn up in biographical accounts of well-known intellectuals. Accepted unquestioningly as fact, these details linger. I wonder about the relation between space and content—between physical geographies and imaginative possibilities—and the points at which they are impossible to separate clearly.

Contemplating the physical environment as an agent of writing falls in line with Walter Benjamin's observations about the ways interior spaces shape and reflect culture. Benjamin likens the atmosphere of nineteenth-century dwellings to an experience of intoxication when he writes, "To live in these interiors was to have woven a dense fabric about oneself, to have secluded oneself within a spider's web, in whose toils world events hang loosely suspended" ("Interior" 216). Images of thick brocade and a spider's web evoke an ensnaring home that mediates encounters with an exterior world. He compares these dwellings to shells, cases, velvety folds, and wombs. Such visions of closed, ar-

chitectural spaces seem to reflect a feeling of wariness about containment and the limits of perspective. To me, the way these spaces control access to the outside world is similar to the way the frame of a photograph structures reality.

While many scholars working today might not choose to write in university libraries or other locations on campus, the conceptual and literal spaces of universities profoundly affect how and what we write. Considered as a frame, the university and all its attendant geographies, histories, expectations, investments, and atmospheres shape scholarship produced under its purview. The photographic frame, Judith Butler writes, "does not simply exhibit reality, but actively participates in a strategy of containment, selectively producing and enforcing what will count as reality. . . . This means that the frame is always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realizing and de-legitimizing alternative versions of reality" (xiii). If the university system is a frame through which undergraduates, graduate students, adjunct faculty members, and nonadjunct faculty members orient themselves toward the world, then the choices about how and when to adjust this frame carry great significance. Work produced in the all-consuming bubble of university life often elides questions about how institutional spaces have influenced writing. What versions of reality do universities contain, what versions do they reproduce, and what gets left out?<sup>2</sup>

Even as photographs cannot exist without frames, universities inevitably shape scholars, just as scholars in turn seek to take part in transforming institutional cultures and structures. When we consider how we

write now, our choices about how to engage with the physical,<sup>3</sup> political, and conceptual framing of universities might lead to more experimentation with writing practices—practices considered “new” or arcane. Sometimes, transforming the genres of scholarly writing creates openings in conversation and audience. What would it mean for more young scholars to gain experience writing collaboratively instead of solely producing prose monographs? Or to compose graphically? What about leaving space for nonlinear practices of organization and thought?

In 1928 Benjamin published “Thirteen Theses,” a set of instructions about writing. Thesis 11 cautions, “Do not write the conclusion of a work in your familiar study. You would not find the necessary courage there” (“One-Way Street” 81). Almost a century later, the academy should still answer a call that challenges the familiar and safe. If enough emerging scholars dare to explore the limits of academic thought and form, university frames might just begin to shift. Perhaps there will be fewer late nights. And we might let far more than the sound of cicadas in.

## NOTES

1. Scholars have more often studied the locations in which literary authors write. For notable examples, see Marsh and Fuss.

2. Discussions about universities’ influence on scholarship have recently moved into the mainstream (e.g., Birmingham).

3. Campuses of American universities were frequently separated spatially from cities, though that practice has been changing (Diner).

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## The Written Form

ASHLEY COLEMAN TAYLOR

In “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” Audre Lorde writes, “The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized” (36).

Lorde urges women to write themselves into better existences by casting new light on oppression and unfulfilled dreams. In this piece, Lorde posits poetry as the form in which women (or other oppressed groups, for that matter) shall find freedom and design a new “architecture of our lives” by engaging the vital process of imagining new worlds and new

“places of possibility” (38, 36). In the often re-cited line “For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence,” Lorde elucidates the importance of the accessible written form of poetry for women, who are often omitted from lists of the canonical elite. Poetry, for Lorde, “forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action” (37). Poetry is a pragmatic tool for designing a world in which the most marginalized are free to shape their own destiny. As a scholar who takes seriously the words of the self-proclaimed black lesbian feminist mother warrior poet as fuel for existence and ammunition for dismantling hegemonic systems of oppression, I am led to understand that the forms in which I write—essay, article, narrative—cannot be separated from the form *through* which I write. That is, my body—physically made up of tired joints, aching head, sore wrists, and tight lower back, yet psychically made up of my ancestors’ dreams and nightmares—is just as important to the process of producing scholarship as it is to the written result.

External pressure demands that as a junior scholar I use my body as a machine to churn out academic articles and evidence-based books while the possibility of tenure dangles above my head. Internally, however, I charge myself with the task of centering my embodiment in my work. I realize that I am not a talking head, nor a product of the mechanized academic assembly line programmed to produce cookie-cutter scholars who regard speed, production, and uniformity as their goals. Instead, I resist the corporate machine of the academy by claiming a unique individualization from the long, arduous process of academic self-discovery through graduate-school training. I am a scholar who writes from her own heart, mind, and corporeal experience. Writing through the embodied form resists the fast-moving corporate machine of

the university system by requiring writers to engage in the slow, methodical process of questioning themselves, then writing from the groundedness in their own materiality. This process resists the disembodied, flash-in-the-pan scholarship that often characterizes the digital humanities and other technologically fetishized forms of scholarship. Taking account of my body in the world, the messages it communicates to the world, and the messages it communicates to me, I resist the temptation to be led by the fast-paced academic industry.

For me and other humanities scholars who represent marginalized groups, I find that the embodied form—the racialized, gendered, classed, sexualized body—and the resulting lived experiences cannot be left out of our academic products. This form is not only the body we write *with*, the materialized form curled over the glowing computer late at night with quick-moving fingers and darting eyes, which miraculously brings ideas to life on a blank, white area on the screen. It is also the materialized form of superimposed social ideologies, historically rooted violence, and the oppressive, stifling “no” of a society built on the exploitation of black bodies and the commodification of enslaved flesh. For academics who encounter the violence that systemic oppression inflicts on their bodies each day, for those who cannot walk down the street without the fear of being subsumed into the carceral state, called out of their names and treated like animals, or murdered with the possibility of their bloodied form going viral on the Internet, writing through the body and its embedded meaning is not a luxury; it is a necessity.

For some scholars, writing is the only way to imagine a radical elsewhere beyond the terror we feel reverberating in our communities each time racist political figures create laws that affect our lives in ways that state-sanctioned oppression could never affect their own. For the black, the trans, the queer, the undocumented, the disabled, the poor, the woman, the “of color,” the gender-

nonconforming, the disempowered, or those whose existence combines any of these categories, the slow process of writing is the only way out. For us, freedom is found by honoring the forms *through* which we write. These forms, the bodies that many find abject or unruly, will ultimately be the vehicles that write to design both our futurity and our freedom in academia and beyond. For us, the embodied form through which we write shapes the ideas projected on the page. Through this writing body, we author our “hopes and

dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action” (Lorde 37). This is the way we write now as scholars and the way we must continue to write.

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## I, Too, Dislike It

CHRISTOPHER LIRETTE

Say you wake with the sun, drain coffee into your body. You listen for hours to the sound of your fingers refusing to hit the right letters, spell the right words. You do not get up for lunch. At some point, you unslump your shoulders and arch your back. Some words come. You get up to eat when it is late enough to drink. Say this is your routine. Say that you want, of all things, to write some scholarship.

People—say you have friends unaffiliated with academia—are not particularly interested in what you do all day as a doctoral student. To be fair, you are not forthcoming with the singular things that animate you at your desk: a weird line in an old book, the sight of fish blood slicking the deck of a Lafitte skiff, an image that has stayed with you from your fieldwork two years ago. You are a little embarrassed. Your friends, some of them younger than you, make a lot more money after a lot less schooling. They spend their days wielding knife and spoon or walkie-talkie and gaffer’s tape or iPhone with *Twitter* and *Slack*. Like you, they are not stupid. They too thirst for a more thoughtful society, a mean-

ingful life. When you have had enough Sazeracs to tell them about your research, they listen with generosity. For a moment, you remember why you do what you do: to share with others a different way of thinking and the discoveries that birthed it.

Say this encounter, precipitated by friendship, alcohol, and the dim light of a room just quiet enough for you to be heard, evaporates the next morning. You wake with the sun. You warm up leftover coffee. Your back hurts. Cascading windows on your monitor contain years of research: notes, interview footage, transcripts, nineteenth-century maps obtained on the scholarly black market, PDFs of books and articles, and a truly impressive *EndNote* database of citations. You have 162 books out from the library. Your shelves sag under the weight of things you have read. On your *Word* document, the cursor blinks after a sentence fragment—“The repetition of this blood”—that you cannot quite remember how to finish. You know, nestled in your clutter, that it is one thing to make your research sound vital and sexy to your friends

and quite another to write something that matters to the audience *out there*. If you can believe the prophets of the humane letters, your scholarship cannot survive in a world without paper, one in which, they say, we will soon live. You wonder if your *EndNote* library might be enough for tenure in this new world.

After rereading Adorno for your dissertation, you make the mistake of playing the entire catalog of Arnold Schoenberg on *Spotify* while writing, and now you're pissed off. You feel the urge to spit. Forget competing with blogs, the golden age of television, and *YouTube* or confronting the abject denigration of truth and intellectual rigor committed by no less an institution than the executive branch of the United States government. Say you are the first in your blue-collar family to graduate from college. The real source of your anxiety—which, when you are feeling generous, you blame for your writer's block, poor sleep hygiene, and erratic diet—is the fact that you must find a job that will pay you in money and insurance. You will need more than your fancy doctorate to sneak into the forum of thinkers, all classless and free and able to support themselves and their growing families.

If I were in your situation, I would channel your feeling of helplessness—the thick heat of the Ford Explorer with a single working window and no AC or power steering that you use to pick up your daughter from daycare, an institution that claims half of your university stipend<sup>1</sup>—into your writing. I would write toward the hope, even if it proves futile, that your writing might help bring forth a world worth living in.

I would make a lyric utterance, a desperate sort of communication, one that is both real and unreal, that might shake some other possibility loose from a closed institutional framework that rewards professionalization. By employing the moves of the poet—metaphor, parataxis, rhythm, persona, and image—the scholar might reach into a live world, touch real people. What we do matters,

but only if our research and the force of our writing can burrow into the heart of a reader. In my just-finished dissertation, I wrote, “I hope that this kind of lyrical scholarship exceeds the arguments it makes. I want to be a splinter that nags, a rope-burn, a threat” (79). If I were you, feeling the caged heat of a post-grad-school summer job market, I would remember passages that haunt me and invoke them to speak again. I would have faith that there are still unlike things left to put in dialogue. I would remember the lines from the poet Marianne Moore, famous for her dislike of poetry, that argue that images in a poem “are important not because a // high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are / useful” (lines 6–8).<sup>2</sup> The only way that scholarly writing can remain useful is through the precision and genuineness by which it traces the contours of reality and its possibilities.<sup>3</sup> If I were you, back-bent and hungry, I would remind myself that writing is my best tool to build something other than the fatal product of history, to provoke readers to build alongside me.

## NOTES

1. As an Emory University graduate student, I was privileged to have a generous stipend topping out at \$25,000 per year. At other institutions, students are asked to make do on much less.

2. This essay takes its title from the first line of Moore's “Poetry,” the poem cited here.

3. I am thinking of works by scholars such as Lauren Berlant, Ann Cvetkovich, Michael Jackson, José Muñoz, Kathleen Stewart, and Michael Taussig.

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## Slow Writing: Archival Research in the Digital Age

MARLO STARR

Interrupting my self-imposed deadlines, Lucille Clifton is teaching me the art of slow writing. Reading drafts of Clifton's poem "in the same week," I am struck by the poet's recursive process. Across eleven typescript drafts, Clifton begins composing the elegy for her brother, Sam, from the top again and again. Following the repetition of "sam" across the drafts, I am pulled into the poem's looping grief in a way that I had missed in my readings of its published version.

In our era of big data and new-media communication, how we read and write are objects of ongoing debate. While some mourn the loss of physicality that accompanied the rise of electronic platforms, digital scholarship offers unforeseen possibilities for innovation in research and pedagogy. Yet, as the digital humanities has been lauded as not only "the next big thing" but "the Thing" itself, the future supplants the present, and the slow labor of archival research is relegated to an antiquated past (Gold ix). While scholarly writing requires methodical and careful research, academic culture also demands that we "publish or perish," a write-or-die paradigm that pushes quick, formulaic scholarship. Against this expectation of speed, I look to the plodding nature of archival research to consider a slower mode of writing. My intention is not to uncritically privilege one institution over another: as Daniela Agostinho reminds us in "Big Data, Time and the Archive," the archive, as well as big data, naturalizes its authority through selection and exclusion (440). Instead, I aim to counterbalance the hype surrounding the digital, the numerical, and the quantitative with an examination of the relevance of "small" data gleaned through tactile confrontations with manuscript archives.

When entering the archive, I sometimes feel like a grave robber. The rows of gray, uniform Hollinger boxes lining the shelves remind me of a mausoleum, and yet their contents evidence a much livelier materiality. As Susan Howe writes in her poetic reflection on the unpredictability of archival research, these boxes with their labeled file folders contain "singular whispering skeletons" (41). This notion of grave robbing is a response to the polychronicity of the archive, where the living and the dead are gathered together into a single moment. Their intermingling represents a synthetic "breathing together of all ages," to borrow Osip Mandelstam's phrase, and in this way archival material is a continuous presence, not a stand-in for an irretrievable past (532).<sup>1</sup> The multitemporality of the archive shows history as never finished and encourages an approach to research and writing that emphasizes rather than mystifies process.

This view of the archive as swirling, cacophonous history might seem to promote chaos, and yet the archival object is also always particular and situated in its historical context. As the poet Lyn Hejinian writes in her essay "The Rejection of Closure," "The undifferentiated is one mass, the differentiated is multiple" (56). Hejinian distinguishes between what she sees as "open" and "closed" texts; while the closed text offers a stable vision of the world by permitting only a single interpretation, the open text "foregrounds process, either the process of the original composition or of subsequent compositions by readers" (43). While big data is ostensibly objective and complete, it requires a reduction of information, using the narrowest of data sets to "function effectively on a large scale" (Agostinho 441). Conversely, when engaging with primary-source materials, researchers sort through small details to

thread together the beginnings of a story. Each new piece complicates easy conclusions, frustrating efforts to produce quick results.

Seeing, touching, sifting through, and piecing together these material artifacts not only enables a slower mode of writing but also opposes neoliberal impulses that attempt to tame the messiness of experience or to flatten information to a single plane of data. This method of research requires patient, sustained attention and facilitates archival encounters that reveal the particular human details that slip through big-data representations. As I open the deceptively neat archival box, Clifton's automatic writings spill out of envelopes, on scraps of paper with widely different handwriting patterns, some with burnt edges. I study the phrases that the poet, in a trance, had hidden behind photo frames or inside her shoes for later discovery. Even preserved in an archive, these fragments are continuous and uncontainable. Sorting through these partial glimpses of a singular life, I lose track of the hour. I take my time.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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ASHLEY COLEMAN TAYLOR is a visiting lecturer in the Institute for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Georgia State University. Her book manuscript, "Magestad Negra: Race, Class, Gender and Religious Experience in the Puerto Rican Imaginary," is a finalist for the National Women's Studies Association / University of Illinois Press First Book Prize. Her current project, "Atlanta as Black Queer Place," is an oral history that centers on the lived experiences of

## NOTE

1. I borrow the term *stand-in* from Dominick LaCapra, who warns against fetishizing the archival object as "a literal substitute for the 'reality' of the past which is 'always already' lost for the historian. . . . It is a stand-in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the thing itself" (qtd. in Spivak 249).

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Atlanta-based LGBT activists and features qualitative geospatial methodologies.

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# “Oscar Wilde’s Book”: Early American Reviews of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

## Introduction

OSCAR WILDE’S ONLY NOVEL, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*, FIRST AP-  
PEARED IN THE JULY 1890 ISSUE OF THE AMERICAN PERIODICAL *LIPPIN-  
cott’s Monthly Magazine*.<sup>1</sup> While the sometimes acrimonious reception of the  
novel in Britain has been routinely noted, less scholarly attention has been  
paid to the reception of *Dorian Gray* in the United States. Even when schol-  
ars allude to the reaction of the press there, they do so almost always as an  
afterthought—as a way of juxtaposing the novel’s censorious reception in  
Britain with its supposedly more positive reception across the Atlantic. Thus,  
in the introduction to his definitive edition of *Dorian Gray* for Oxford Univer-  
sity Press, Joseph Bristow comments in a footnote that he has “found no evi-  
dence of outright hostility towards *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the American  
press,” before outlining “the trouncing that Wilde . . . experienced” in Brit-  
ain” (In101). Similarly, in his general introduction to the “uncensored” *Dorian  
Gray* for Harvard University Press, Nicholas Frankel notes of the novel, “To  
be sure, appreciative and sensitive reviews appeared in Britain and America,  
but a significant segment of the British press reacted with outright hostility,  
condemning the novel as ‘vulgar,’ ‘unclean,’ ‘poisonous,’ ‘discreditable,’ and  
‘a sham’” (5). In her contribution on Wilde in the series Bloom’s *How to Write  
about Literature*, Amy Watkin is even more Manichaeian: “Americans loved  
it,” she declares. “English reviewers did not” (129).<sup>2</sup>

This tendency in Wildean scholarship can be traced back to an older  
text on Wilde: *Art and Morality: A Record of the Discussion Which Followed the  
Publication of Dorian Gray* (1907). Still the major collection of early *Dorian  
Gray* reviews, *Art and Morality* was edited by Wilde’s friend and acolyte Chris-  
topher Millard, under the pseudonym Stuart Mason. Whereas the majority  
of British reviews chosen by Millard for republication are critical of Wilde’s  
novel, the only two reviews from the United States that he includes in his col-  
lection—both of which were, significantly, written for *Lippincott’s*—seek to  
defend *Dorian Gray* from its attackers. However, the late-nineteenth-century  
literary spheres in Britain and the United States had much in common, and  
the existence of reviews in the United States that were critical of the novel—  
reviews that were widely dispersed at the time—complicates this and

E. J. EDWARDS

INTRODUCTION BY  
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lications of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,  
*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *The  
Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

subsequent portrayals of *Dorian Gray*'s reception there. The issue of *Lippincott's* in which *Dorian Gray* appeared went on sale at the end of June 1890. A review by Elisha Jay Edwards, titled "Oscar Wilde's Book," appeared in *The North American* of Philadelphia about a month later.<sup>3</sup> When he wrote the review, Edwards was still to achieve true professional success.<sup>4</sup> Already, though, in this review one can see that "Edwards especially enjoyed uncovering corruption" (Alego 139). He opens by pronouncing Wilde a man of "notoriety" and informs the reader that "a step farther than Mr. Wilde has gone would be sure to cause the arrest of the author and publisher and the suppression of the book." Indeed, the reader is told, Wilde's is "a story of passion"—"the passion which, under the statutes of many of our states, is, if followed, punishable with death" (a bizarrely inflammatory falsehood that belies Edwards's earlier Ivy League legal training).<sup>5</sup>

Commenting on *Dorian Gray*'s reception in the United States, Bristow quotes an early article in *The New York Times* by "H. F.," who suggests that if English reviewers read homoerotic overtones into Wilde's novel, it was only because "since last year's exposure of what are euphemistically styled the West End scandals Englishmen have been abnormally sensitive to the faintest suggestion of prurieny in the direction of friendships." By contrast, the article declares, such "bestial suggestion" would have occurred to only "one American reader out of ten thousand." If this was the case, however, then a number of these American readers must have also been writing for their nation's newspapers. Alongside Edwards's review, with its thinly veiled accusations of homoerotic misconduct, one finds further references to *Dorian Gray* in the American press that are—if much less substantial in length—equally pointed in critique. Thus, for *The Indianapolis Journal*, Wilde's novel was "an unpleasant tale" that "could only be produced by a writer whose imagination was in an unhealthy condition" ("Magazines"), while the *The Daily Critic*, based in Washington, DC, deemed Wilde's contribution "the most unspeakably nasty product of the generation" ("Stiggins Crusade"), and *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* believed *Dorian Gray* to be one

of the "modern works of filth, where the patent licentious beastliness is covered over by palpitant passion flowers of fancy and the soft glamour of unholy romance" ("Modern Appetites"). A lengthier article in New York City's *The World* went even further, echoing Edwards's suggestion of criminality in declaring Wilde's novel "the sensation of the day in certain circles of society"—those circles "which call for constant police supervision" (Review).<sup>6</sup>

Some seven months after these reactions, when *Dorian Gray* was being prepared for publication as a book, Wilde's British publisher asked the editor of *Lippincott's* if he had any "American newspaper notices" that might serve as "useful" advertising. In response, the editor wrote to Wilde, "enclosing a selection of the best" and noting, "I wish, for all of our sakes, that they were more favorable" (Stoddart). When *Dorian Gray* did appear as a volume, the homoeroticism of Wilde's story was substantially toned down. Bristow reflects a widely held view when he argues that this toning down "was in part a response to the harsh critical reaction . . . of the British press" (xii). The digital revelation of once-obscure material—the documents below were located through digital archives—allows us to question the narrow nationalism of this argument and to wonder if the press in the United States might have also played a role in redirecting Wilde's editorial approach.<sup>7</sup>

## NOTES

1. Founded in Philadelphia in 1868, *Lippincott's* was a second-tier mass-market magazine written for the expanding middle class (Mott 396, 399). Since 1887, the magazine sought to differentiate itself from other periodicals by publishing a complete novel in every issue. Beginning with the first issue for 1890, a British edition of *Lippincott's* (in which the final third of the contents varied from the edition in the United States) was also published. The same text of *Dorian Gray* appeared in both editions of the magazine.

2. See, likewise, Gillespie's assertion that "American readers of *Lippincott's* gave *Dorian Gray* a far more friendly response than [did] the London critics" (347).

3. Not to be confused with the better-known *North American Review* or *The North American Magazine*, *The North American* of the mid- to late nineteenth century

was “a thoroughgoing and vehement Republican partisan” (Bloom 170) that maintained a modest, primarily north-eastern readership that fluctuated somewhere between three and fifteen thousand (175). I have also found Edwards’s review under the same title in the *Bismarck Daily Tribune*, of North Dakota; in *The Olean Democrat*, of New York; in *The Topeka Daily Capital*, of Kansas; in *The Atchison Daily Globe*, of Kansas; in *The Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, of Pennsylvania; in the *Hornellsville Weekly Tribune*, of New York; and in *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, of Kansas.

4. Edwards was in his early forties when he wrote this review and on the cusp of significant professional achievement. Indeed, in the two or three years that followed, he would launch an increasingly respected financial column (“Holland”), begin a slightly fractious friendship with the soon-to-be discovered American author Stephen Crane (Wertheim), and, perhaps most important, reveal that Grover Cleveland, the president of the United States, had just undergone a secret operation to remove a cancerous facial tumor (Alego 144–46).

5. Sodomy was not a capital offense anywhere in the United States in 1890. In 1873 South Dakota became the last state to reduce the punishment for that act to a term of imprisonment (Crompton 287–88). For Edwards, a graduate of Yale Law School, this inaccuracy may therefore have been wishful thinking, an intentional misrepresentation, a purely rhetorical flourish, or a mistake. He was a law student between 1870 and 1873 (Leonard), and his legal knowledge may have been outdated.

6. “The most widely read daily in the Western hemisphere,” *The World* (edited at the time by Joseph Pulitzer, for whom the Pulitzer Prize is named) was a populist publication that mounted “a self-declared war on privation and privilege,” which involved “exposing what the *World* took to be the moral decadence of British aristocracy” (Juergens vii, 210, 223). The anonymous article was also published, as “Oscar Craves Continued Notoriety,” in *The Daily Inter Ocean*, of Illinois, and *The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo*, of Missouri.

7. The first review originally appeared in *The North American* on 16 July 1890 and is reprinted in Gale’s database *Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers*. The second review appeared in *The World* on 17 July 1890 and is reprinted in Ancestry’s database *Newspapers.com*.

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## Oscar Wilde's Book

### It Will Doubtless Serve the Purpose for Which It Was Written.

#### [Special Correspondence.]

NEW YORK, JULY 13/15 [?].—IT IS PERHAPS something of a coincidence that in the current number of Lippincott's Magazine there are contributions from Oscar Wilde and Edward Heron-Allen.<sup>1</sup> The coincidence which brings these men of notoriety together in this magazine is emphasized by the fact that they are probably the only two writers who use the English language, and very likely the only ones to be found in any other language who have constructed novels the underlying suggestion of which is something not to be spoken of, scarcely to be thought. When Mr. Allen published his piece of fiction it created no other comment than that caused by the belief that he had, with skill and by artful suggestion, caused a tale to turn upon the abnormal.<sup>2</sup>

Oscar Wilde, in the story which is printed in Lippincott's under the title of "The Picture of Dorian Gray," has overmatched the skill of Heron-Allen, and has undoubtedly accomplished the purpose which, in addition to pecuniary consideration, he had in view when he wrote the story. One of the epigrams contained in the novel declares that there is only one thing worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about, and Mr. Wilde, whose maneuvers with the sunflower and knee breeches have long since ceased to make him notorious, will be likely to find in this lat-

est venture of his that he is talked about, and it is probable that will satisfy him, although the chatter which his work creates would be regarded with the utmost dread by most human beings.<sup>3</sup>

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" seems to have been suggested partly by the myth which describes a youth as having fallen in love with his own picture, and which as a classic tale of mythology is a beautiful narration, and it is also inspired by Mr. Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Dorian Gray, an extremely handsome young man, falls in love with his portrait, and it is the desire of his heart that in his own body he shall ever remain as the picture represents him to be, while the process of growing old is transferred from his own body to the portrait. Into the abnormal state of mind thus developed Dorian becomes infatuated with his own personality, and also produces an effect upon other men which causes them to become infatuated with him. The sorrows and the utter physical degradation, as well as malformations of intellect and character, which follow this development form the basis of the story.

Of course the seeker after the abnormal and shocking in literature can find nothing beyond the possibilities contained in such a conception as this. A step farther than Mr. Wilde has gone would be sure to cause the arrest of the author and publisher and the suppression of the book. It is of course a story of passion, as "The Quick and the Dead" was a story of passion, but the latter is natural pas-

sion idealized, whereas the former is the passion which, under the statutes of many of our states, is, if followed, punishable with death.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Wilde writes entertainingly in the lighter passages of the book, but there is a sort of forced brilliancy and a suggestion of worked over epigrams, which, while it gives the work an air of smartness, will hardly cause it to be regarded as a piece of excellent literary workmanship. It is possibly Mr. Wilde's purpose to convey a moral in his story which would be of good effect in certain aristocratic circles in England, but if that was his purpose he has no art in executing it. When Balzac wrote of hideous vices he analyzed and dissected them so that the horror of them was maintained and the awful power of the moralist's pen was made evident. There is no such art in Mr. Wilde's novel, and the suggestion is rather in the direction of sensationalism than of the highest art and morality.

It will probably surprise none of those upon whom Mr. Wilde bestowed his intimacy when he was in this country to know that he has written such a book, for it is written in the manner in which he has occasionally narrated anecdotes to choice and private circles.<sup>5</sup> Although Mr. Wilde came here as an exponent of aestheticism he was not indisposed to view life in all its phases in New York, and of this disposition one public evidence was obtained through the facility with which he was steered by a bunco sharp into one of these notorious games.<sup>6</sup> It is pretty safe to predict that if *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is ever published in book form it will find its way into no home, and will be read in a corner by those who buy it, yet it doubtless will serve the purpose which caused the writing and publication of it, because it will be talked about and thus most widely advertised.<sup>7</sup>

THE MOST ABSURD RECENT STATEMENT ANNOUNCES that Oscar Wilde's book is to be dramatized. It would be a marvellous exhibition if carried out, but there is no more chance of

it than there is that the "Decameron" will be produced at the Madison Square Theatre. The opinion among Mr. Wilde's friends here is that he must either have gone daft or lost all sense of decency. His book is the sensation of the day in certain circles of society, but they are circles which call for constant police supervision. The indescribable nastiness of the book is all the more remarkable when people consider Wilde's experiences of the world. It cannot be claimed that he wrote of things or phases of life about which he knew nothing, as has often been the case with some of our erotic female novelists. Unfortunately for the early apostle of aestheticism, the public is well acquainted with his experiences of the world, so that he can never put forward the claim of ignorance with success. The charitable view of Wilde's remarkable effusion is that his craze for notoriety has reached such a point that he is willing to descend to any depth to keep himself in the public's eye. The last expedient to which he has resorted is one of the most remarkable ever adopted by the numerous army of posers whose lives are passed in indescribable efforts to get themselves talked about. A saturnine old member of the Union Club remarked yesterday that the newspapers had to thank themselves for the fame of three of the most grotesque fools on earth. "They are Oscar Wilde, Tolstoi and O'Donovan Rossa," he said, "and none of the three is worth powder enough to blow him into the mud where he belongs."<sup>8</sup>

## EDITOR'S NOTES

1. An article by Heron-Allen—a man of varied interests and a friend of the Wildes—succeeded *Dorian Gray* in the July 1890 issue of *Lippincott's*.

2. The "abnormal" novel by Heron-Allen referred to here is likely *Ashes of the Future (A Study of Mere Human Nature): The Suicide of Sylvester Gray*, which was published in 1888 and which Isobel Murray has identified as a potential influence on *Dorian Gray* (xxi–xxiv).

3. Wilde was routinely criticized in the press for base, publicity-seeking behavior in Britain and America. Curiously, though, in a subsequent piece by Edwards published in *The Daily Atchison Globe* in October 1893, Wilde's "art of keeping himself in the public eye" becomes a praiseworthy indication of entrepreneurialism: the writer, we are told (by now "the most brilliant if not the most profound and true to human nature of the English dramatists") has shown himself to be "a very keen businessman," whose "skillful advertising of himself as an eccentric" has led to his having acquired "fame" and "great fortune."

4. Amélie Rives's quasi-erotic novel *The Quick or the Dead?*, in which a young widow falls in love with the man who would become her second husband, had appeared in *Lippincott's* in April 1888.

5. Wilde began a yearlong lecture tour of the United States in January 1882. Particulars concerning the "choice and private" social circle for whom Wilde "narrated anecdotes" "in the manner" of *Dorian Gray* appear to be out of reach. More generally, however, one might think of Wilde's letter home to Norman Forbes-Robertson during the tour: "I am torn to bits by Society. Immense receptions, wonderful dinners, crowds wait for my carriage. I wave a gloved hand and an ivory cane and they cheer. Rooms are hung with white lilies for me everywhere. I generally behave as I have always behaved—*dreadfully*" (qtd. in Morris 37).

6. While in New York City, Wilde encountered Joseph "Hungry Joe" Lewis, a "bunco steerer" (bunco, or banco, was a rigged card or dice game popular in the late nineteenth century) to whom he is reported to have lost five thousand dollars, which he later managed to recuperate by quickly canceling a check. For an account of this incident—and of Lewis ("alias Hungry Joe, alias Francis J. Alvany, alias Henry F. Post")—by the then "Inspector of

Police and Chief of Detectives, New York City," Thomas Byrnes, see Byrnes 167.

7. *Dorian Gray* would be "published in book form" by Ward, Lock, and Company (the publishers of the British edition of *Lippincott's*) in April and July 1891. As Mason notes, sales of the book "could not have been large, for the first edition (consisting probably of not more than 1000 copies) was not exhausted for nearly five years" (22).

8. Jeremiah "Dynamite" O'Donovan Rossa was a high-ranking Fenian exiled to the United States in 1870. From his New York home, he organized perhaps the first political dynamite campaign to target English cities (Kenna 106, 143).

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little-known documents

Sylvia Townsend  
Warner's Letters to  
Genevieve Taggard

Introduction

IN SEPTEMBER 1941, SHORTLY BEFORE THE UNITED STATES ENTERED WORLD WAR II, THE BRITISH WRITER SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER wrote a note to the American poet Genevieve Taggard, thanking her for sending a poem. An epistolary relationship developed between the two writers, though Taggard also sent material gifts of spices, tea, rice, and seeds to alleviate the deprivations that Warner and her partner, Valentine Ackland, faced in war-battered England. Eighteen letters, all from Warner to Taggard, remain of this correspondence, which ended with Taggard's death in 1948. They are housed in Taggard's papers at the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library. Although Taggard's letters to Warner have been lost, Warner's letters to Taggard reveal a literary friendship that is at once partisan and poetic. These private letters, like the public "Letter from London" columns by Warner's fellow *New Yorker* contributor Mollie Panter-Downes, vividly portray the English home front to an American audience.

Warner's letters to Taggard describe, in her characteristically ironic tone, everyday life in a southern English village from which she can "hear the guns" of Normandy. Stories of Warner's wartime work with the Women's Voluntary Service and her interactions with American servicemen are punctuated by strikingly lyrical passages such as a description of a pile of rusty "tank-traps," which Warner sees as a "group of fanatic women by Goya." Warner has become known, since her death in 1978, for her correspondence, and five volumes of her letters were published between 1982 and 2011. As Gillian Beer writes, "Warner was one of the most wonderful letter writers of the twentieth century in English; much of the correspondence was addressed to people far away . . . and partly for that reason the letters admit each reader to an intimacy immediate and uncurtailed" (81). While Warner wrote fewer letters to Taggard than to her other correspondents, these letters are nevertheless distinctive in their detailed descriptions of wartime experience framed by a shared political position. The letters were not included in the aforementioned editions of Warner's letters and have not been published until now.

Unlike Warner's, Taggard's work has yet to garner much scholarly interest, though she was a central literary figure in Greenwich Village in the 1920s and a

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

INTRODUCTION BY  
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well-known activist poet in the 1930s and 1940s. Warner and Taggard's epistolary relationship supports Nancy Berke's claim that "[t]hough Taggard may have been neglected by the conventional canons of American modernism, she was embraced and appreciated by many women, other radicals like herself" (88). Warner and Ackland joined the Communist Party in 1935 and remained committed even after the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939. Taggard did not officially join the party but was a fellow traveler, sending Warner her 1943 pamphlet of poems on the Soviet Union.

Warner never met Taggard in person, though they shared friends through a network of radical writers. During a visit to the United States in 1939, Warner gave a speech on the historical novel for the third congress of the antifascist League of American Writers, of which Warner's friend Jean Starr Untermeyer and Taggard were founding members. It is likely that Taggard was a face in a crowd of about three thousand attending the Carnegie Hall event the June night Warner spoke (Folsom 84). It is not clear why Taggard first sent her poem to Warner, but Taggard and Warner were directly connected through Jean Starr and Louis Untermeyer and Warner was widely known to an American audience through her contributions to *The New Yorker*. After the congress, Warner submitted work to the *New Masses*, where Taggard served as editor and was a regular contributor.

Heather Love aptly characterizes Warner's historical novels of the 1930s as producing "an alternative form of political feeling, a non-utopian expectancy" (143), a description that also applies to these letters. In her first substantial letter to Taggard in 1942, Warner states that poets "are charged with such perilous stuff" that "being living, changes from harmless to perilous, from perilous to harmless, from lively to deadly, almost every day of the week." Alluding to her historical fiction alongside Taggard's poetry, Warner emphasizes a shared attempt to revise tired words and narratives, with no guarantee of success. She also suggests "social amelioration" as an alternative to radicalism in a 1943 letter in which she tells Taggard that the army's ban on the Beveridge Report, that founding document of the postwar British welfare state,

resulted in a desire to "fly to revolution in the same trustful spirit that others fly to calomel. . . . [T]hey won't trouble to enquire who mixed the draught."

Although her fiction is better known than her verse, Warner writes to Taggard as a fellow poet in these letters, which include two unpublished verses of her own. In a postwar letter from 1947, Warner contrasts Taggard with Emily Dickinson, the subject of a 1931 biography written by Taggard, stating, "You are not a virgin, and you have none of that carefree Calvinism. . . . On the whole I think I prefer poets with a sense of duty." For Taggard, Dickinson represented a modernist, female lineage in American poetry; Warner here advocates for a different kind of poetic affiliation, manifested in these letters as "poets with a sense of duty."<sup>1</sup> After the war was over, Warner made plans to edit a volume of Taggard's collected poems in Britain, though the project never materialized. Included here are edited versions of the eight letters that Warner wrote to Taggard during the war along with three postwar letters that explicitly reflect on their relationship. All the letters reveal a transatlantic connection between two leftist women writers that intertwines the political, literary, and personal. The letters also offer a compelling account of what Warner calls the "waiting-room" of the war in all its frightening uncertainty.

## NOTES

I would like to thank the following people and institutions for their invaluable assistance: Tal Nadan and the staff at the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, Tanya Stobbs and Morine Krissdottir of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society, Morgan Swan at the Rauner Special Collections Library of Dartmouth College, and Judith Benét Richardson.

1. Warner also attempts to promote Ackland's work, which had never received the attention that Warner's had, throughout these letters. For example, Warner mentions sending a copy of Ackland's *War in Progress* to Taggard.

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## Sylvia Townsend Warner's Letters to Genevieve Taggard

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden  
Newton. Dorset.  
9. ix. 1941.

Dear Genevieve Taggard,

Your poem came safely. It is a beautiful poem, and I am very glad to have it. With no ingratitude for what the people in your country are doing for us I can still say that it is very reviving to get, after so much armament, so much food, so much clothing, a poem; after so many anxious ravens, a dove.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden  
Newton. Dorset.  
21. v. 1942.

Dear Genevieve Taggard,

I very much appreciate your way of sending me poems. Without any ingratitude to kind friends in your country who send me tea and toilet tissues and dehydrated onions . . . poetry seems to me a more exhilarating arrival. War is constantly reminding one that one has a frail, exacting and anxious body; but not so often that one has a tough, adaptable and hopeful spirit.

Your book came yesterday. And this afternoon, having an afternoon off, I have been sitting by an open window sometimes looking at raindrops hanging on an iron rail and a small slow river and then reading another poem.

How good they are! How pungent and how solid; in other words, and as I see it, how genuinely lyrical. A lyric is ill-achieved if it can't at once knock one over and bring one to. On darkness, on evil, on night, etc.<sup>1</sup> That has wanted saying a long while, and has negated the negation of the sub-conscious. Negating the negations is, I see, the true task of serpents.

I doubt if there is all that difference between being at war and being in a world at war, and so I don't think there is much that I have learned that you don't know already. But perhaps I am one jump ahead; and so you will let me cry back one word of advice. There is a bad crack opening, and worst of all, it is opening in the hearts of people who are good and simple. And that crack is a developing mistrust of science and progress. Science, and progress, what have they brought us to?—bigger and better bombs and tougher armament and higher explosives. This is how it seems to these good and simple ones; and from that the crack deepens to a homesickness for a past that never was, a golden age of covered waggons and home-made bread and Lucy singing at her wheel, and all the rest of it. And when the crack is wide enough they will fall into it and into fascism.

It is a serious danger, if it is here it is bound to be with you presently—if you have not got it already. We must guide people past this crack in the road. It is a pity that the

scientists are so tongue-tied. If they would roar and yell at the way science has been exploited and misrepresented the good and simple might get it clear in their heads that science is more than a fancy word for destruction. But meanwhile, we must be deadly careful how we use any evocations of folkways, any oaten pipes. You might mention this to some of the other poets. We are charged with such perilous stuff; and the worst of it is that the stuff, being living, changes from harmless to perilous, from perilous to harmless, from lively to deadly, almost every day of the week.

As a result of those last Baedeker blitzes masses of people who have never looked at a guide-book glory, and would probably dislike it if they did, became perfectly furious and implacably defiant. I doubt if Hitler will ever be a success with the British public.

Sincerely

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden

Newton. Dorset.

27. viii. 1942

Dear Genevieve Taggard,

I have delayed writing to you. It has been difficult to write during these last weeks to anyone one esteems. The situation has been so lamentable that ordinary news seems an outrage; and in such a situation I at any rate lose my five senses, see, hear, nothing significant, only a life *en plat*, paper-thin people against paper backgrounds. This evening I am better supplied. For news—I daresay you won't object to hearing it again, even though you know it already—The Daily Worker has been released. I don't know why, but at any rate we shall have it again, and be freed from a very ignominious piece of nonsense.<sup>2</sup>

The other thing is something I saw this evening. Like every village, our village has things called tank-traps, large rusty V shaped iron affairs. They are propped up against a

white stone wall, and I have passed and re-passed them, and never noticed anything about them except that they were there. This evening, because of a particular sharpening of perspective that comes with dust, they hit my eye suddenly; and they were a group of fanatic women by Goya. You know his convention, his short triangular women with the mantilla falling sharply from the high comb? There they were, rusty black against the white wall. You could almost hear their voices, and the bony clatter of their rosaries. It is so exciting when one sees something not as being *like* something else but as being the thing in itself. I shall always feel that I have seen a Goya, hot from the brush, and all of my own.

The swallows are gathering to fly south, the young birds, that is, who make the first flight. It is always the untried who are off first, I suppose. This morning a robin began to sing the Ode to Autumn, and our apple trees are heavy with fruit. At night one can hear the first-falls dropping on the grass, plop-plop—and the noise is almost indistinguishable from distant bombing. Summer was a dream, a bright shadow; and now it is going.

Thank you very much for sending me the cutting of your review. That is surely the way to set about it. Part of the trouble, I'm afraid, is that so many of the Western intellectuals don't know much about science anyway or only such sciences as astronomy which have little direct bearing on social development (I won't, you see, believe that astronomy has none. I would be an astrologer and plant by the Zodiac, rather). I myself am a shocking example of this, scared off by all the mathematical cordons around the garden. I have been trying to cultivate my own small garden in this respect. I am sent off from time to time to give what are called 'educational talks' to soldiers. And we had great fun with vitamins—a sitter of a subject for every one likes the thought of them—with scurvy and rickets and the cow in the sun, and children, long before rats or rabbits, being the labo-

ratory animals that demonstrate with such clearness what comes of deficiency.

But approaches to science are bus routes compared to the approach to the land, so it seems to me . . . that magnificent Animal whose coat is so full of vermin. I can never look out of my window with stereoscopic vision. With one eye I see the sweeping hillside, the rushes and hemp agrimony along the river bank, the hill-top corn-field like a golden helm. With the other I see through the crystal waters the old thrown-away tins, the toe-rags, the drowned doe-rabbit with her young ones tied to her hind legs—some childish sunday afternoon's sport after sunday school. I see the old village drunk with his noble, his venerable face—the only face, perhaps, in the place with undoubted marks of intellectual day. I see the farmer, and worst of all I see the farmer's wife. But how on earth to see with both eyes at once?—

When I was young it was the fashion to scorn the eighteenth century poets with their nymphs and shepherds (ignoring, of course, a considerable quantity of eighteenth century verse). But since then I have often wondered if The Everlasting Mercy, for instance isn't a much more virulent misrepresentation. For that matter, and to come much nearer the bone, the bone of being good poetry, what about Robert Frost? I cannot credit that everyone in New Hampshire is so much like an eating chestnut. What no one yet has said in poetry is the shallowness of so much country living, the snail-track of existences dragged out over repetition of works and days and seasons. The profound depth of earth sleeping, and these husks blown over its surface, or rotting away in the stack-yard. There is a poem of Valentine's in Dove or Seagull called The Lonely Woman which has something of this.<sup>3</sup>

By the way, I wish you would read some of her recent things, especially some of the set called War in Progress. There are ms copies in your country, a young man called Franklin Brewer has them. His address is 704, S. Wash-

ington Square, Philadelphia. And if you wrote to him, and mentioned that I said so, he would relinquish them to you. They are very fierce and fine. I would like you to see them. She has come on a long way since Dove and Gull.

It is very kind of you to offer to send me nourishments. I should like beyond anything else to go on seeing your poems. Less urgently, but still it would be a great solace, I would like a little cinnamon—if it can still be got with you. Heavens, I hope for the sake of New England that it can be!

Ever,

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden  
Newton. Dorset.  
23. ii. 1943.

Dear Genevieve Taggard,

A book of poems and a box of spice are fine gifts to receive, both so long established as necessities; and yet special and secret, while the system that prepares the common life and the common diet follows recipes that leave them out.

The Falcon<sup>4</sup> itself is so beautiful. I know so well the gesture of a woman lifting her child, or her water-jar, but I had never married them. Thanks to you I now know them properly. And the reconciliation with Tolstoi, that needed thinking out and saying.

Do you know the Khatchatourian Ode to Stalin?<sup>5</sup>—It was broadcast in this country for the 25th anniversary. Your poems chime in with it in my mind, there is the same quality of natural fruit-like beauty; you understand what I mean by fruit-like beauty. A fruit is much simpler than a flower, much more direct, but also much more luxurious. A poem came into my mind every time a wave foamed. That is like a pear; and Khatchatourian also seems to me to have that luxurious directness.

Your spices have been a great comfort to us in a rather tasteless winter. At last—I

feel almost inclined to say, at long last—this country is beginning to live harder, and do without. We still consume too much bread (most people think it should be rationed), and we still waste far too much wheat; the millers grind fifteen per cent to waste, edible wheat-stuff that should go into the loaf, and don't use barley or potato as they should. Either we should have a much coarser browner loaf, or a much smaller one. But we have been pretty good, most of us, about saving fuel. Nature has helped. It has been an open winter.

The most serious doing-without (not a very well-adjusted one) has been borne by the small craftsmen, the small shop-keepers; who in the country districts are the only ones, and essential. The ministry of labour thinks in terms of towns (so do other government departments: the regulations for civil defense, for instance, all assume a certain density of population, and are desperately difficult to apply to rural areas), and has no time or patience for the only watchmender, the small-town tailor, the net-mender or the cobbler. The gales have shifted some of our slates, and today, apologising for not having been able to come before, the village builder and carpenter arrived just before sundown. His boy has been called up, he has no helper at all. His day is taken up with priority work, repairs to barns and farm-buildings, and most things he does take almost twice as long, because, as he said, he is no sooner up his ladder than he has to go down it again. When I offered, very diffidently, to help him, he closed with it *sans façon*. And next week I begin an odd career as part-time builder's boy. He would have taken me on regularly, but I have other jobs. I shall hold the ladder, and knock out nails, and hand up tiles, and mix mortar, and saw boards, I suppose. But when you realise that this is the most old-fashioned, custom-tied part of England and that fashion and custom alike forbid mixing of class and mixing of sex, you will understand how much the last six months have changed us. It is brave of

him, desperately brave; he is exposing himself to a lot of laughter at the public-house; but as I say, desperately brave. Oddly enough, I am not, in village judgement, showing any moral courage. I am only being rather foolhardy, as I might fall off a ladder. Village judgement has decided that the gentry are so obtuse, so crassly insensitive, that under no possible circumstances could they feel embarrassment. On the whole, I agree with this.

Here is a poem. I find I can write only the plainest, most nursery-rhyme sort, just now.

Nosing through the scarves of rain  
With a mild mechanic drone,  
Even in a bombing plane  
Coming home is coming home.

Portland, Chesil, Aldhelm, Swyre:  
Brief they beckon, friendly all  
As the nursery shapes the fire  
Printed on the nursery wall.

Landfall: jolt of ground beneath,  
Lights and laughter, eggs and flak,  
Interrogatory of death—  
Dreaming pilot, come awake!

The sort of thing one writes in a waiting-room. We have sat in a waiting-room so long. Just the same rumours about preparations for a second front as went round last spring are going round again—and rather louder leaden echoes of 'Can't believe a word you hear.' If we are fooled twice, God knows what may happen. Meanwhile this is certain. The fascists are out and about again, very busy. Even in our dull country town there are chalkings of the swastika and the Mosley flash-in-the-pan. And a soldier told me (with bitter fury) that when last he went home to Bristol on leave he saw all the old slogans, Perish Jewry, Out with the Jews, and the rest of it. What is alarming is not so much that these things are attempted, as that they get away with it. Scribbles on the waiting-room wall, as you see. I don't doubt that action would end it. But every day of inaction hands the fifth column a free gift.

Write to me some time, and tell me how things look in New York.

Ever

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Did you get to reading those poems by Valentine Ackland that I wrote about?

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden  
Newton. Dorset.  
21. v. 1943.

Dear Genevieve,

I was very pleased to have such a good long letter, that told me a great deal about you, and that the lilacs would soon be out in Vermont. If I ever get to USA again, be sure I will come to you in Vermont . . . in time, perhaps, to meet the extant Ethan and Gracie Allen.

I am so very sorry about your sister. I can understand by inversion what a great loss it is for I never had a sister, and that is a loss too. No comfort was ever conveyed by letters of condolence (except perhaps by that letter from Lincoln), and thank heaven with you I need not attempt the impossible. I am just very sorry for you.

Yes, I too find myself gloomier on Sundays; gloomy and rather greasy, for our weekly meat ration comes on Saturday and on Sunday we eat it; and latterly I seem to be eating a lot of dead children along with it, I can't discover how people in general are feeling about the starvation in occupied Europe, how often they think of it, how they feel. But I surmise that they bury the thought, and feel an impotent hangdog embarrassment, and a good deal of superstitious anxiety about god and retribution and things like that. If the government said to the people to give up to feed the starving, I think in the mass of households there would be an instant response; but there is no sign that the people will say to the government that such a thing must be done. I have an idea that the pseudo-socialism of this war, rationing, and state con-

trol of this and that, all working remarkably well between an accomplished civil service and a law-abiding population, has weakened the force of public opinion, and somehow infantilized us. So many defeats too has helped this on. The ordinary good citizen has come to feel that the only thing he can do is to be as little trouble as possible, to keep on with his job, to remember regulations, to trim ship and keep out of the way of the navigators.

Tunisia was taken very quietly. There was a feeling of relief at something being got out of the way, pretty much the same feeling of relief as when in spring-cleaning the housewife says: Well, now we've moved the furniture out, and can get down to scrubbing. Most of us have kept some sense of arithmetic, and remember the difference between 15 divisions and 200. The air-offensive on Germany is much more talked of. In the last 18 months feeling has hardened a great deal. In the old days there was a tendency to say Poor things, and Think of all the little homes destroyed. There was not much compassion in it, it was mostly sentimental and self-regarding. Now one scarcely hears that. People say instead, Well, now they're tasting their own medicine. But I have not heard anything of this sort said about raids on Italy, then it is: Those poor bloody Ities. Germany is quite definitely the Enemy, and I should never be surprised to find the people of this country feeling that the wrongs of Italy at the hands of Germany must be avenged. This is partly the result of propaganda. Rommel's series of brilliant evasive movements leaving the Italian forces to hold the baby made good material to encourage the notion of the Axis falling apart (and with the USSR-Polish affair in the offing propaganda had to prepare a counterbalance, a tit for tat); but the leaven has gone much further into the lump than anyone can have foreseen. Too far, I surmise: this wealth of affection for Italy makes too good a nest for a France-Vatican egg to be laid in. On the other hand, the popularity of Italian

prisoners is something to the good, because it may break down part of the anti-Latin feeling which developed after the last war, and was such a damned nuisance in the thirties, when German fascism was tolerated on the grounds that the Germans were so clean and efficient, and why wouldn't they be Nazis if they wanted to, and Italian fascism was tolerated on the grounds that the Italians were so hopeless anyway that Mussolini was the only good thing that might pull them together.<sup>6</sup>

It must seem strange to you that I don't say anything about Japan. It seems strange to me, too. But if I am to be representative, I can't really say much. Partizanship for China, a feeling that the Japanese must be got out of China, yes. The threat to Australia, yes, too; but latent, till the threat becomes more of a threat. But Burma and the Malay peninsula . . . and the East Indies: to return to my simile of the spring-cleaning, they are great mahogany sideboards inherited from greatgrandfather, and it might be easier to keep the room clean if they could be got out of the way once for all. Mind you, these vague yearnings to be quit of awkward chunks of empire are purely political. If it were realised that cheap labour in the east meant cheap food and social benefits here, it would be different. But one of the worst results of our very parochial and Trades Unionified Labour Party is that the average British worker has no idea of the economic drainage system which lies under his linoleum and his hearthrug. Those great mahogany sideboards are thought of in terms of all the time it takes to polish them and the coat of furniture polish, not also as containing great quantities of tea and jam.<sup>7</sup>

To have some idea of what is going on under their feet seems to me much more vital for populations than to know what happened in the past. I quite understand that it is shocking when High School students think that Lincoln seceded from the Union and Whitman leads a band; but we too are constantly giving painful shocks to our contemporaries, but not

knowing the average rate of pay in textile industries, or how much soap it needs to do the family wash. At least, I know I am. I can see only one solid advantage in knowing the history of one's own country: that one is then less at the mercy of politicians who lie about it and call the agglomeration of lies Tradition. If we are to educate for a better society, we should now concentrate on educating for asepsis. I would not mind all my students thinking Lincoln seceded from the Union if I could be sure that half of them knew the Civil War was fought for other motives besides liberating the slaves. I would exchange fifty per cent of them understanding the Civil War for ten per cent understanding the colour bar in 1943. I suppose teaching in USA is just as bad as teaching here, with the same desperate insistence on the past, the same refusal to teach the present. In one way you should be better off. Your freedom from such libel laws as we have make it more possible to teach the present; in the newspaper text-books, I mean, where people pick up most of their learning. Yet educating for asepsis is tricky and dangerous enough, for it is so easy to teach only disbelief and disillusionment. There has been an example of that in the reactions to the Beveridge report here. When it first came out there was, besides the cloud-cuckoo-land hopefulness that was inevitable, an element of genuine interest and curiosity. People wanted to understand how it could be done, bought Beveridge's-made-easy and began to discuss and argue. Then Beveridge was banned from army education; the instant reaction was that we had all been suckers to fancy that anything was meant by it, and with unanimous disgust at having been made fools of we left off discussing Beveridge. The upshot of a diehard determination to keep socialism away from the Forces has been that quite a number of men who believed that the Beveridge scheme might mean a genuine social amelioration are now saying that nothing will be done in this country unless revolution blasts a way for it. A nuisance, re-

ally. Too many now are ready to fly to revolution in the same trustful spirit that others fly to calomel; and if the bottle is labelled revolution they won't trouble to enquire who mixed the draught; the Commonwealth draught, for instance, in a bottle of piously gothic outlines, has some very odd ingredients in it, and a strong tincture of Salazar.<sup>8</sup>

I am glad you are going to re-read the Ackland poems in the *New Republic*. But it is a great nuisance having to look through files, and so I am mailing you a spare copy of *War in Progress*.<sup>9</sup> Quite apart from being interesting poetry it is interesting as an unfaked record of feeling. Valentine gave me the copy for you, and asked me to say how pleased she is to think of you reading it. She has a great admiration for and reliance on your work.

This reminds me. A long while ago I got a cable from Franklin Folsom asking me to send over English war poems. I imagine that there was a letter to follow up, but mails were dubious then, and I never got one. I did send some poems, not many (not very much had come my way); but I think this too much have miscarried, for I heard no more about it. I hope Franklin F. had other, and luckier, collectors too. Auden . . . I don't doubt he looked down at heels, he always did. But I forgive his appearance a great deal for the sake of his hair . . . part hay and part willow and part drowned Lycidas. It used to be proper poet's hair. I hope the American continental climate has not dried all the nature out of it, as farmers here would say.

And my builder. Alas, you must be disillusioned, as I was. Poor builder, when it came to the sticking point he could not screw his courage to it. Convention was too much for him, and after some evasive passes the whole thing flopped. So at present I spend every afternoon helping the local doctor, bottle-washing, and doing up medicines in those hierarchic wrappings, and checking over drugs and so forth. Being a country doctor, he has to be his own dispensary (it is too difficult

to get prescriptions to the chemist in town, everything has to be done on the spot), and in time I may get to be quite useful to him. Meanwhile at any rate I save him some of the dog-work, and enjoy learning a new terminology, and acclimatising my nose to a whole gamut of smells. I am lucky, too, to be learning something new at my age, and something which is international. But I am very sorry to disappoint you in the builder. Never mind. He has a whole tribe of very sturdy worthy upstanding children, and has bought them an encyclopaedia.

Ever,

Sylvia Townsend Warner

I hope you are not blood-letting too often. It is a very short interval, and I guess you work pretty hard.

Lovely to have more spices. I distribute them to deserving cooks, and they are a joy to dozens.

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden

Newton. Dorset.

16. viii. 1944.

Dear Genevieve,

This is Sylvia. Do you remember me? It is so long since I last wrote to you that I shall not be surprised if you don't. Or perhaps you know dozens of Sylvias. I am that Sylvia you sent spices to. Lord, how you would have laughed at my Christmas tea-party to two unknown US officers but I had discovered that one was from Boston. This is cinnamon toast, I said warningly; but he was talking at the time and did not hear me, and bit into it, still talking, and was halfway through it, talking still, when a bemused and rather uneasy expression crossed his face, the sort of expression that goes with, Did I do up those buttons? Why, this is cinnamon toast, he said, looking at me as if I'd played him a dirty trick. Don't you like it? said I. I wasn't expecting it, he replied, and went on talking. He

talked like a tank from four to six, rose up on a parenthesis about dining at six, and was still talking as he went away. The other one only spoke once, to say he liked the advertisements in the *New Yorker*. With more space I felt we could have established a good relationship on that, but we could not get beyond silently handing each other buns, and refusing them with smiles. He was such a handsome boy, a Captain, and too young to be a Captain, and back from Sicily with malaria, and too young to have malaria; and desperately drunk in an innocent resigned way. And I wished the Bostonian had not been so bent on making the afternoon a steady success, for it seems to me if we had been left together with the advertisements in the *New Yorker* I might have done something for him. But I daresay not. It is not easy to do things for people half one's age who feel themselves in a foreign country. And he came from Minnesota.

I don't know where Huckleberry Finn came from, we didn't get that far. I heard a disturbance in my riverside tree, and looking up, there he was in the tree's heart with a clasp knife in his hand, just about to hack off the leader. I remarked that it was late in the year for birds-nesting, and he replied that he was getting him a fishing-rod. I suggested he try some other tree, as I had a liking for the one he was in. Then he came down in dignified silence, staring at me like an animal, wary and stately. It was impossible to say whether he'd fly at me or flatten his ears. After one brief movement towards the hedge where he'd come in he bethought himself, and moved towards the gate, always keeping an eye on me, moving always a little faster as he got out of reach. I could have eaten him. It would have been an ambitious fishing-rod too, excellent for tarpon. But our small river only has trout. There again, he was in a foreign country. I am sure he would never have been caught like that in his own. But I hope he's profited by the experience now he's in France, as I'm sure he must be.

The other young man, a much more ingenuous specimen, that remains in my mind, is a red-haired boy, half Irish half Hungarian, and born Brooklyn. Him I got to know very well, he came up to the book sorting depot where I work and in ten minutes I had his mother's address, and his projects as a writer, and was discussing with him the management of some awkward corners in the play (one of several) he was writing about a woman pope, in his spare time as a Chaplain's orderly. Next time we met (by arrangement, needless to say, he was a very capable young man) he was asking me for an introduction to Alyse Gregory, Llewelyn Powys's wife, who lives about ten miles from Dorchester. Would I also put in a word of introduction for the chaplain? I demurred a little, explaining that Alyse does not naturally welcome chaplains. Oh, but she'd like this one, he wasn't the ordinary type of chaplain, he was a congregationalist. I was still looking rather dubious when he said; You see, it's this way. I can't get there unless I use the Chaplain's jeep. So I'd have to take him along. I take him everywhere.

But alas, this beautiful visit didn't come off, because my young man and his chaplain moved away, and now for a long time I have not had a letter from him, and I would be glad to get one. I can't help feeling that such a tropical egoism as his, he was bloomed all over with it like a tulip tree, is a provocation to death.

In my book sorting I see a lot of Armed Services editions, pocket books, and what not, and admire them, and wish we had something of the same kind. You are lucky to have paper—and an administration that thinks one good use of paper is to print books on it. You have probably seen the paper allotment figures for this country; they are significant and shameful. My WVS sorting depot began as an attempt to do something to fill the demand for books that came from the soldiers.<sup>10</sup> At that time all salvage was supposed to go straight into pulping; but our office being above a sal-

vage shed we began sneaking books out and carrying them off in our pinafores. Then we got our depredations semi-officially legalised, thanks to an intelligent Major who came and spoke up for them; and by the time salvaging books for the forces became an official activity we had been doing it under the rose for nearly a year. I imagine that the same sort of thing was taking place everywhere. I doubt if the O.K.-ing of combing salvage for books would have been given if it had not been preceded by a considerable extent of revolts like ours.

The only thing that's wrong with the AS editions is their format. The long page doesn't stand up to wear, it crumples, and folds up. The pocket books keep their condition much better.

Up till about a month ago we could hear the guns in Normandy very clearly (I saw your gliders going over on the night before D.day, and very pretty they looked). Now there is no sound of war here except outbursts of Cockney voices (music to me, since I was born and reared a Londoner). This is the third round with the evacuee problem; 1939, 1940–1941, and now. It doesn't get any easier with practise. I say to myself that even in USSR evacuation didn't always go well, so what can we expect? The things that get into the press—dirty manners, thieving, arrogance on the part of the evacuees, inhospitality, exploiting, on the part of the hosts—don't seem to me to be more than a few odd bits on the surface. Generally speaking the evacuees are clean and honest and amiable enough and the receivers hospitable and kindly. What wrecks the transaction is that the evacuees are so helpless and parasitic. Not the old ones, who are full of enterprise and makeshift; but the bulk of what we now get, the young mothers between eighteen and twenty-eight, seem almost like mental deficient, very well dressed and quite well-educated. But incapable of finding their way to the post-office.

They have all been brought up under ameliorationism. They have had the enlight-

ened LCC as a general grandmother, and in most cases a Labour Borough Council as a nursing mother. They have had clinics, playgrounds, after-care, welfare workers, social committees; and their own mothers and fathers into the bargain, overcome with delight to see their daughters growing up with all these advantages. I have never seen a more convincing, more demoralising, argument against ameliorationism. I doubt if even Fascism could produce more ameboid young women than these unfortunate daughters of the british labour party.

Of course, admittedly, we get the softest specimens. The real dyed in the wool Londoner stays in London. But they are a sorry spectacle, so clean, so classy, so well trained in mothercraft and so totally without fight or initiative. So silly, as the Welsh say—their profoundest denunciation, applied to people who get had up for murder, commit suicide, and go round the village killing drunk.

Goodbye and best wishes,

Sylvia

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden

Newton. Dorset.

6. xi. 1944.

Dear Genevieve,

Here I sit on a rainy cold afternoon of early November wishing you a happy Christmas, and—what's more to the purpose—a good New Year. More instantly, at this moment I am wishing you a good Old President . . . though by the time this reaches you it will be all in the historical tense.

We have been so be-urged and be-threatened here that if we express our hopes too plainly it will do no good to British-American relations that we scarcely mention the matter at all, or only amongst ourselves with the curtains drawn. But though we keep quiet about it, we think a lot, and I suppose in spite of our discretion it must

be fairly plain which way we feel about the election in this country. Right away from party politics (and you would hardly believe how difficult these islands find it to disentangle Republicans from Democrats) there will be a great sense of disappointment and ingratitude if FDR isn't re-elected. The least political animal here (would you say, a donkey?) is at least aware that he has been a good friend to us; and that this is no moment to lose a friend.<sup>11</sup>

In a very November state of mind we are settling in for the sixth winter of war! Though one tried not to be led away into cheerful vain speculations by the advance through France and Belgium, though one held on to one's realism and glued one's eyes to the map of Europe, it was impossible not to give away to a little fancy hoping. 'Frozen thawings' are very painful wearing, and we are all more or less chafed by them.

An old Scotswoman has just been staying with us, we were taking of longevity, the longevity of people and of causes, and she told how her grandfather had told her how he in his youth had known a man who had seen Prince Charles Edward ride into Dumfries in 1745—three lives (if she lives out another year as she has every intention of doing) spanning two centuries. It was astonishing how we all sat up, illuminated by these battles long ago. They seemed so fresh, so exciting, in the sixth winter of this war.

Here's a ridiculous piece of nonsense. But pray observe the pins. The pin has been so rare, so precious, an object during these last few years that the Victorian pincushion came back into its own, and with an orange-stick was the boast of dressing-tables. And every one of these pins is a warranted pre-war pin, as issued by H.M. Stationers, Civil Servants, for the use of. I can vouch for them, because my uncle who was a civil servant supplied himself, as they all do, with H.M.'s pins; and when I was being his executor in 1937 I carried off a packet, saying to myself

that pins are always useful things to have about. Little did I guess then how grateful I should come to be for that thrifty impulse. But the interest is now only historical, for pins are again on the market, and drapers sell them with calm.

Affectionately,

Sylvia Townsend Warner

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden  
Newton. Dorset.

7. xii. 1944.

Dear Genevieve

Thank you so much for the parcel of spices that came safely a few days ago. You may be sure they will be well used, both by me and by the deserving housewives of my acquaintance who will get doles of them.

Oh yes, there have been plenty of people eating cinnamon toast in a more fortunate concatenation since the Santa Claus from Boston; including, by an extraordinary stroke of luck, one of my dearest friends, who not only got drafted to Europe, to England, but to a camp so well within reach that he could spend two week-ends here before going on. And by him some of your spices returned to their countrymen. He arrived, laden with oranges, a dozen of them; and told how his company (he is a Sgt.), seeing him putting by, insisted on contributing to the hoard. So he carried back a pot of pickled onions, and a jar of green tomato chutney, in which you had aided me a great deal, were, in fact, the life and soul of the party. At first only a few brave souls ventured on the latter, but they reported well on it, and sent their friends, and it was a great success.

He told me one story that is such a perfect epitome of military training that I must tell it to you. Franklin is one of those people who are always doing something extra, and so it happened that he was busy during his company's first lesson in throwing hand gre-

nades, and only arrived after the instructor had left. So he had to ask a friend, a stout thoughtful Mexican called Valdes, to pass on what they had been taught. Valdes, in creative silence, and looking like Lily Dache, twisted a leg here, and a leg there, and finished off with a few smart wrenches, leaving Franklin in a tottering true lover knot. Franklin remarked that it didn't feel as if it were possible. Valdes enquired: 'Are you completely uncomfortable?' Franklin assured him that he was, and Valdes' face relaxed into a peaceful smile as he said: 'Well then, you're right.'

Thank you so much for your letter and for the poems. I especially like Song 11 because of burdened and mild. That is exact. Another phrase that I shall remember was your account of the man who sells black gas. What a fugue of sinister attention to an English ear!

Here is something I wrote yesterday.

Prepare, Scobie! – Zervas! prepare the  
return of monarchy!<sup>12</sup>

Roll out the carpet for the still-hesitant  
tread.

No crimson so inflexible as the patriots'  
blood,

No pile so resilient as trampled liberty.

I was pleased to see quotations from the US papers against our exhibition about Sforza. I imagine they will be even sharper against this disgraceful business in Athens. There is an interesting theory (I give it you as such) that the whole of the Bonomi-Sforza bungle was manouevered in order to put Eden in a bad position, as the right wing Tories, with their eye on an election, are anxious to de-popularise him, and be rid of him.<sup>13</sup> They certainly would find it hard to do the second until they had done the first. Straw vote results quite unequivocally put him as Churchill's successor.

Better new year!

Ever,

Sylvia

[Excerpt]

Frome Vauchurch. Maiden

Newton. Dorset.

1. iv. 1947

[. . .] You are not a virgin, and you have none of that carefree Calvinism which makes her able to give those conscienceless sideways leaps. I am not, indeed, altogether an acquiescer in Emily [Dickinson]. Sometimes I love her with my mouth wide open and my eyes dazzled; at other times I begin to think of very bright pins stuck in a pin-cushion. On the whole I think I prefer poets with a sense of duty. Emily had none whatsoever, either in her poetry or in her life. Renunciation I cannot count as duty, not her kind of renunciation. It was just a pretext to go on the way she wanted to.

Perhaps you had best not mention these views among her admirers. I have a feeling they would not be well received.

Whenever I introduce an American to Borrow that American is always wild about him, and wants more.<sup>14</sup> I don't think he's forgotten so much as unknown. He isn't what you'd call a popular author over here, either. There is something about him that keeps him hidden in marshy woods or gravel-pits or heaths, like some perfectly indigenous bird which, if you know it, you greet quite often, and if you don't, well, you don't. The books about him, too, are all so snuffy and dusky, you have to grope about in them. But I am sure that there is a sufficiency of American readers for him to justify a Portable, though I daresay there isn't a publisher to credit it. I took a flying leap into Borrow, for I first read Lavengre when I was so young that I supposed the Man in Black was the devil, as in Bunyan.<sup>15</sup> This didn't spoil my pleasure at all, as I liked the devil in literature, though about the same time I didn't attempt Gogol's Dead Souls because I felt sure it was some sort of tract.

Talking to you of Borrow with your letter beside me with its mention of Edmund Wilson brings it into my mind that the former exactly

shows up in the latter. No one, I suppose, not even Wilson, was more prejudiced than Borrow, and even Wilson isn't much sillier when he displays his erudition. And the one is as reviving as oysters, and the other is like some dwindled toadstool. It is the difference between hating and grudging, may be. What is troublesome is that hate is intermittent, and allows room for other activities of the mind, but grudging goes on and on, nothing deflects or diverts it. And as it requires no effort and any fool can do it, such quantities of fools follow suit. Orwell doesn't have the same position over here, partly because of the metropolitanism of our intellectuals, which makes them half-hearted about someone from the midlands. Not even Trotskyism can really weave a blanket wide enough to put Orwell and Conolly comfortably to bed together, though they may park their boots side by side on the same mat. I am glad you can live at Gilfeather, and boil sugar and so on. These are no times for writers.

With best wishes,

Sylvia

[Excerpt]

[On lined letterhead]

9. ix. 1948

Dear Genevieve.

The Harper letter . . . I think that what struck Miss Laurence as odd must have been my insistence that any collection of your poems 'chosen' by me must be subject to your choice as well.<sup>16</sup> I have no patience with the notion that one poet, just on the strength of being a poet, can make a proper selection from the work of another poet. It's not possible. Even when there is sympathy, as between your poetry and me, sympathy isn't knowledge. I know what you've done. I don't know what you on a long term development have aimed to do; and I won't just pick feathers from your wings and pretend that that is how you fly and the direction of your flight.

I would very much like to have a hand in an anthology of you, and to write a foreword to it; but you must tell me more or less what lines you want brought out, and what poems you want included. It must, in fact, be your you, and not my idea of you.

Selecting one's own work is such a devilish job—and leading to such agonies of wanting to tinker, rephrase re-adjust—that I don't know if you will feel up to it. But I hope you will; if not now, then a soonish later. What the reception will be I don't know. My publisher told me when I saw him last month that the market for poetry is now very half-hearted. But that's not to say it won't pick up again. There was all the difference in the world between the market for poetry in 1920 and 1922, and the same thing may happen again. If you have another book coming out (I didn't know. I am so glad.) anything we do must wait for that, of course. We will have all the holy crows, the Eliots and Vaticana, trying to pick out our eyes, that goes without saying; but they are with us anyhow, so why trouble about that?

I am sorry to think you have to go back to hospital, I hope it is really only for a minor tidying, and that they don't keep you there too long. I have tasted the first fruits of our national health scheme, for not long ago I had such a very small boil that it really only deserved to be looked on as a pimple; nevertheless, I received yards of fair white linen gauze, and a large bottle of black boluses containing iron and hogs liver . . . of all things! but really they are very efficient, and I have remade a whole strawberry bed and not wilted nor wavered as a result of the powerful goodness in them; and not a penny to pay, and the uplifting reflection that the pills, if you buy them at a chemist, are very expensive indeed. Nothing is worth the misery of being ill; but a small ailment can be almost a pleasure when a fond country pays for your pills.

[. . .]

With my love to you . . . and I do hope you will soon turn your back on your illness, and leave it far behind you.

Sylvia

21. xi. 1948.

Dear Kenneth Durant,

I did not know of Genevieve's death till your letter came this morning. Though I am sorry that you should have the additional pang of writing this news to me (for I know, from experience, every such letter enforces the sense of bereavement) I am very grateful to you for telling me, and sparing me the shock of learning it from a newspaper or by report, as a stranger might.

I am deeply sorry. I was so much attached to her by her poems and her letters, and by the particular warmth and candour that glowed in them that it seemed only an unimportant accident that we never physically met. Or did we, perhaps, see each other for a moment during the Writers' congress? Anyhow, she is more real to me than many people I have met constantly, and I know I have lost a kind true friend. And along with that I know that causes I hold dear have lost a brave, keen, and warm-hearted fighter, and that liberty is the poorer without her voice to speak of it.

I hope that the English edition of her poems will go forward. You must write to me about that later.

If I should come to the States again, I will indeed hope to visit Gilfeather, already endeared to me by her wish that I should share her delight in it. Her generous poetic power of giving and communicating . . . she had already made me feel welcome there. When people are as generous as she, there is no end to their giving. You will feel this more and more, I know, and that will be as she would wish.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Townsend Warner

## EDITOR'S NOTES

All the letters were originally typed with the exception of the letter dated 8 April 1948. I have not included in this edition words that Warner crossed out on the typewriter. The letters dated 1 April 1947 and 9 September 1948 are presented here as excerpts; excised passages in these letters have been marked with ellipses in brackets: [. . .].

1. This poem appears on page 17 of Taggard's collection *Long View* from 1942: "Let those of poor energy / Fear night. Not I. / Night does so unmake me / Into purity of disparate parts, where I lie / Sleeping my wrong dreams my / Bad fears that they may never be. // And out of self so ill / Begin again / With the unbroken will, / The unspoiled energy of the lion's den. / Night's the recess under the hill / Where serpents uncharm men."

2. In January 1941 the British Communist *Daily Worker* was banned ostensibly for publishing material that subverted British interests in the war. The ban was lifted in the fall of 1942. Warner's partner, Valentine Ackland, was a contributor to the publication.

3. Ackland and Warner published their joint book of poems *Whether a Dove or Seagull* in 1933. As Claire Harman notes in her biography of Warner, Ackland struggled to get her poems recognized while Warner enjoyed a successful literary career (126, 132).

4. Taggard published a pamphlet of collected poems about the Soviet Union, *Falcon: Poems on Soviet Themes*, in 1942.

5. Warner is likely referring to the Soviet composer Aram Khachaturian's *Poem to Stalin* (1942).

6. Tunisia was firmly under Allied control by early May 1943, after struggles with the Axis armies led by Jürgen von Arnim and Erwin Rommel. The "USSR-Polish affair" refers to the 1940 Katyn Massacre, in which the Allied Soviet Army committed mass murder of Polish military officers. The Nazi government had discovered the mass graves in 1943, inciting conflict between the Soviet government and the Polish government-in-exile in London.

7. British, Canadian, and Chinese forces fought Japanese, Thai, and Indian armies for control of Burma (Myanmar), a British colony. British Malaya was invaded and occupied by the Japanese in 1941. The United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands fought against Japan for control of the oil-rich Dutch East Indies.

8. António de Oliveira Salazar was the conservative, nationalist leader of a neutral Portugal. In 1943 he gave the British the use of the Azores, which greatly helped the British military campaign in North Africa.

9. *War in Progress* is a long poem composed by Ackland between 1941 and 1943. Sections were later published in her posthumous 1973 collection, *The Nature of the Moment*.

10. In World War I, Warner worked in a munitions plant. In World War II, she sorted books and gave free

lectures for the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), an organization that consisted mainly of middle- and upper-middle-class women.

11. The 1944 presidential elections in the United States were between the incumbent president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey. Roosevelt won the election, but his vice president, Harry Truman, became president half a year later after Roosevelt's death.

12. Ronald Scobie was the leader of British forces in Greece from 1943 to 1946. After the war, he became involved in the Greek civil war. Napoleon Zervas was a Greek parliamentarian whom leftists suspected of collaboration with the Nazis.

13. The foreign secretary Anthony Eden had maintained the legitimacy of the British government's veto of Carlo Sforza as Italian foreign minister, despite the American proclamation that Allied governments should not be directly involved in Italian political decisions.

14. George Borrow is a nineteenth-century English author known for his travel writing.

15. Warner refers here to Borrow's *Lavengro: The Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* (1851).

16. Warner had saved a copy of an 8 July 1948 letter addressed to Taggard from a Harpers and Brothers editor expressing interest in a collection of Taggard's poetry edited by Warner. The editor noted, however, that she had found "Sylvia Townsend Warner's phraseology . . . a bit odd" (Laurence).

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# Forum

## Reading Felski: Playfulness, Politics, Pedagogy

### TO THE EDITOR:

Playfulness, politics, and pedagogy: these characterize the three comments I'd like to make about the responses to Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* that appeared in a recent *Theories and Methodologies* feature ("On Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique*" [vol. 132, no. 2, Mar. 2017, pp. 331–91]). First, the *playfulness* of Felski's challenge to the hegemony of critique seemed to me underacknowledged. Her unbarbed wit and good-humored tone contribute to her broader argument that many kinds of writerly energies or critical "moods" exceed the bounds of critique. Downplaying this dimension makes it easier for some to decide that Felski is fundamentally against critique.

Sarah Beckwith provides a happy exception when she acknowledges "Felski's voice—her sense of fun, her own delight and relish" ("Reading for Our Lives" 333). Beckwith also earns points for suggesting that critique ascribes to its imagined other "a gormless credulity" for wishing to speak of anything apart from power (332). (Clearly POTUS does not have *all* the best words.) Stephen Best's call for finer-grained investigations of "how aesthetic pleasure works" is also in tune with Felski's concerns ("*La Foi Postcritique*, on Second Thought" 342), and Heather Love's embrace of everyday life as a counter to "immaculate" criticism welcomes into criticism an affective complexity that critique too often does not acknowledge ("Critique Is Ordinary" 367). Also regrounding criticism in everyday life is James Simpson's typology of stances toward the text: "[s]tranger, friend, and lover" ("Interrogation Over" 380). I wondered about a possible fourth, the familial: early unreflective attachment that years later turns to violence over Thanksgiving dinner. That describes my relation to *Forrest Gump*. And my family.

PMLA invites members of the association to submit letters that comment on articles in previous issues or on matters of general scholarly or critical interest. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit Forum contributions and offers the PMLA authors discussed in published letters an opportunity to reply. Submissions of more than one thousand words are not considered. The journal omits titles before persons' names and discourages endnotes and works-cited lists in the Forum. Letters should be e-mailed to [pmlaforum@mla.org](mailto:pmlaforum@mla.org).

Here's Felski in her characteristically maculate style: "Critique first sniffs out the guilt of others, only to engage, finally, in an anguished flurry of breast-beating and self-incrimination, a relentless rooting out of concealed motives and impure thoughts. Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa—except that, in contrast to Christian theology, there is no hope of final salvation!" (*The Limits of Critique*; U of Chicago P, 2015 [114]). One might object that the collectivizing of guilt is valuable as political strategy—witness Black Lives Matter. But that truth doesn't mean that critique always produces the most useful accounts of literature. Felski notes that when subscribing to critique's picture of social meaning as determined exclusively by power, critics must scramble to find things that resist this principle in order to have something to value: "The result is a zigzagging between categories of inside and outside, center and margins, transgression and containment, as critique tries, like a frantically sprinting cartoon rabbit, to outrun the snapping jaws of its own recuperation" (189). The question Felski poses, in part at the level of style, is whether it is possible to modify the idea of literature as ideological ruse without reverting to aestheticism or mere appreciation. Her answer is that if we value modes of criticism sensitive to the pleasures of reading and to the motives of ordinary readers, we should try. Granted, attention to a broader readership need not be everyone's concern. By the same token, we don't all have to be doing critique, or doing it the same way.

Second, the identification of critique as the default genre of most literary criticism does not equate to the desire to suppress the oppositional politics of critique. A good deal of the dismissive hostility toward Felski's book (more evident in social media than in most of the *PMLA* responses) and, more generally, toward affect theory as an accommodationist substitute for speaking truth to power, probably derives from wounded narcissism. Many of us would like to believe that our critiques of contemporary structures of power, particularly in the age of Trump, can gain traction beyond the university.

The sad fact is that few do, and it is not pleasant to be reminded of the possibility that our efforts to intervene in society through literary criticism may amount to little more than well-intentioned yet routinized gestures. Looking for options beyond critique is not the same as choosing between politics and quietism.

Given that genres don't carry intrinsic politics, new genres of critical approach can target dominant power in ways consonant with the aims of critique. Sadiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* and Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* use very different means toward similar ends. Diana Fuss, in her response to *The Limits of Critique*, is thus right that other options already exist ("But What about Love?"), but insofar as the alterity of alt-criticism is produced by the way critique's prestige crowds out other possible worlds, such examples seem rather to confirm Felski's point. In contrast, Patrick Jagoda's discussion of critical making in the digital humanities as a blurring of distinctions between theory and practice remains true to the terms of Felski's argument by suggesting a way forward that preserves the force of critique without remaining bound within its generic limitations ("Critique and Critical Making"). It also likely helps on the job market.

Finally, that critique operates as the default mode of criticism registers distinctly in the pressure graduate students feel to adopt it. (Ask them.) What, then, does *The Limits of Critique* imply for pedagogy? Licensing students in the undergraduate classroom to express their visceral dissatisfaction with Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* can lead to a productive discussion of characterization per se or to an examination of Dickens's hostility toward labor unions. Graduate students, however, probably need to master the moves of critique from the start: to deform the master's tools you first have to know how to wield them. The challenge is how to teach critique and its limits at the same time. But until schools are ready to hire PhDs who in effect write their second book first, the problem of expanding the critical toolbox for our graduate students is fraught.

Actor-network theory, or ANT, is Felski's "other than critique" ("OTC," or the sound of choking on current critical norms), but nowhere does she say it should be everyone's. And if Bruno Latour's vermicular puns make you want to reach for a can of Raid, that should come as a welcome relief. *The Limits of Critique* is an invitation to experiment with new ways to

connect with a broader audience, but would it be wise now for graduate students in literature to make the attempt? I'm inclined to say let a hundred OTCs blossom, but maybe we need to reconfigure the garden before inviting graduate students into a space whose future is dubious.

Mark A. Wollaeger  
Vanderbilt University

# Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2017 meeting.]

The council met on 19 May 2017 at the MLA office and on 20 May 2017 at the Downtown Conference Center in New York. President Diana Taylor presided. The officers present were First Vice President Anne Ruggles Gere, Second Vice President Simon E. Gikandi, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Emily Apter (20 May only), Angelika Bammer, Brian Croxall, Gaurav G. Desai, Lenora Hanson, Eric Hayot, Margaret R. Higonnet, David Palumbo-Liu, Rafael A. Ramirez Mendoza, Evie Shockley, Vicky Unruh, and Dana A. Williams. David Tse-chien Pan and Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting were absent. The MLA staff members present on both days were Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, and Director of Outreach Siovañ Walker. The staff members present on 19 May were Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Associate Executive Director and Director of Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present on 19 May for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below).

In the morning on 19 May, the council convened in regular session to begin working through the reports and action items on its agenda. After lunch, a regular session was followed by an executive session during which the council conducted the annual review of the policy documents that pertain to the MLA staff and to the working environment at the MLA headquarters office. In midafternoon, the council reconvened in regular session to continue working on its agenda. At the end of the afternoon, the council once again convened in executive session. In the morning on 20 May, the council held two regular sessions and one executive session before holding breakout group meetings to pursue discussions of the projects the council had developed to support different strategic-plan initiatives (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 1, Jan. 2017, p. 206). After lunch, the council convened in regular session to hear reports from the breakout groups' chairs and to complete work on the action items on its agenda and then held a final executive session. The council adjourned at 3:00 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

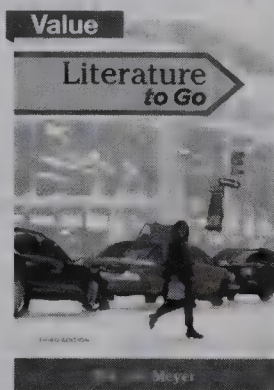
1. *Administration and Finance.* The Finance Committee presented a midyear report on finances with a summary of association income and expenses in the fiscal year 2016–17 after six months. The committee reviewed changes in the projections for the major revenue and expense categories and noted that the projected deficit had



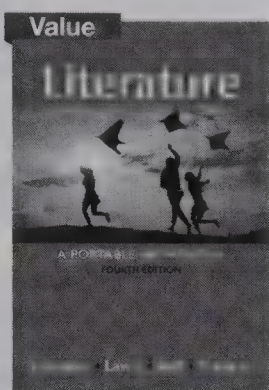
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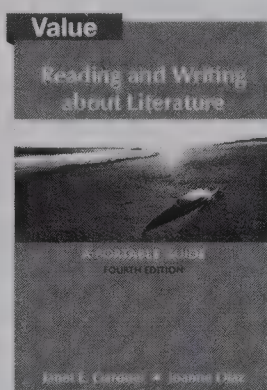
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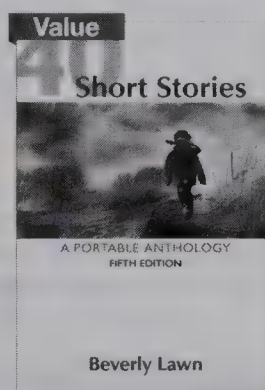
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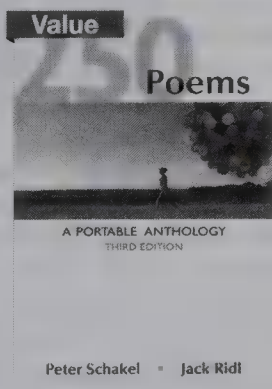
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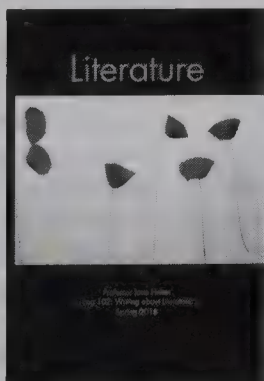
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increased since the start of the fiscal year. Council members expressed concern about the possibility of running a deficit for the second year in a row. Rosemary Feal did not discount that possibility but reminded the council of the association's typical budget pattern—a projected deficit often becomes a year-end surplus, because sales revenue for the bibliography is not recorded until the final months of the fiscal year and because of potential savings on the expense side of the budget. She said that the staff would monitor all budget projections and keep the council informed of any changes over the summer.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2017–18 that projected a deficit of \$682,900 in the association's unrestricted fund. Though overall revenue was projected to increase slightly, the committee anticipated that expenses would also be higher, in part because of the investments in the association's technological infrastructure. After reviewing the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2017–18, the council voted to approve it.

Finally, the council designated EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the association's fiscal year 2016–17 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2017 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its February 2017 meeting for publication in the October 2017 issue of *PMLA*.

3. *Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* The council took five actions between its February and May meetings. (1) It approved a council statement on the resolution process. (2) It signed on to a letter from past presidents of the MLA to Congress that called for the restoration of full funding to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. (3) It signed on to a letter from a group of library and higher education organizations that urged the chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take the group's Net Neutrality Principles into consideration during a proposed review of the FCC's 2015 Open Internet Order. (4) It signed on to an amicus brief that was prepared for a court challenge to President Trump's second executive order on immigration. (5) It approved the sending of a letter to administrators at Stony Brook University, State University of New York, expressing concern about proposed cuts to several of the university's humanities programs.

When these actions were proposed, the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings was implemented (see *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4, Oct. 2010, p. 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the actions on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of the proposed actions, the council's advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed these decisions.

4. *Executive Director Emerita.* In recognition of her tireless leadership of the association and passionate advocacy for the humanities, the council voted unanimously to give the title of executive director emerita to Rosemary G. Feal.

5. *Message Concerning Resolution 2017-1.* Council members were concerned that e-mail messages sent by MLA members to other MLA members to get out the vote on the ratification of Resolution 2017-1 (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, p. 754) were being construed as coming directly from the MLA or the council itself. The council therefore drafted a message to the membership to make it clear that the council was not responsible for any of the messages that were circulating among members and that the council had taken no position on the resolution, as previously noted in the council's March 2017 statement on the resolution process (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 5, Oct. 2017, pp. 1280–82). The council's message was sent to the membership at the end of the day on 19 May.

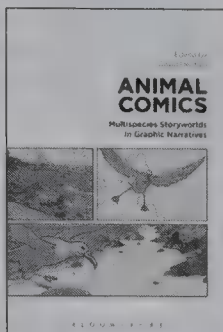
6. *Organizing a March for the Arts and Humanities.* The council decided to explore the possibility of holding a march during the New York convention to promote the humanities and established a steering committee to work on the project.

7. *Modifications to the Strategic Plan.* The staff presented a progress report on the implementation of the strategic plan that called attention to plan initiatives that might be marked complete, revised, or set aside. A completed initiative was one where the work involved had been carried out and had become a regular part of the office workflow. Proposed revisions included consolidation of two initiatives into one, division of an initiative into different stages, redefinition, and expansion or narrowing of focus. It was suggested that one initiative be set aside because it was too costly and did not promise significant benefits for members or their departments. After reviewing the report, the council approved the adjustments requested by the staff.

8. *Report from Council Subcommittee on the Composition of the Council.* The council received a report with recommendations for constitutional changes from the subcommittee established in February to review the categories of representation on the council (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 5, Oct. 2017, p. 1274). The council's discussion of the report touched on the following topics: how a reconfiguration of the council might tie in with efforts to recruit new members; the need for the council to be more broadly representative in terms of fields of study, employment categories, types of institution, and categories like race and ethnicity; whether to pursue a proposal for a council-appointed member; how to address the need for specific types of expertise (e.g., through the use of consultants); and the continued relevance of representation for different membership categories (i.e., student members, regular members, and life members). At the conclusion of the discussion, the council asked the subcommittee to revise its recommendations on the basis of council members' comments and suggestions.

9. *Review of PMLA Structure.* A council subcommittee that had, in 2007–08, taken up several questions relating to *PMLA* (see *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 3, May 2008, pp. 826–28, and *PMLA*, vol. 124, no. 3, May 2009, pp. 998–1000) had

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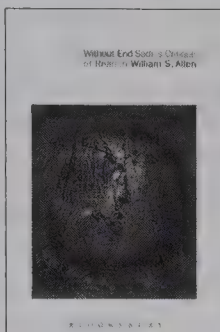


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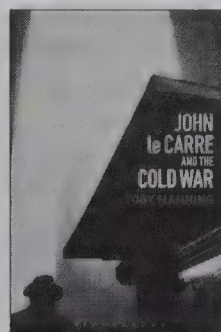


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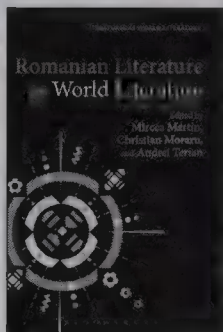
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recommended that the council periodically initiate a review of the journal's structure that addressed the question of whether the journal's special features continued to fulfill their purpose. Given rising printing and mailing costs and the richness of the association's digital platforms, the staff suggested that it would be appropriate to establish a new council subcommittee to revisit the questions explored in 2007–08 and to consider whether changes in the journal's structure might be advisable. The council established the subcommittee and appointed its members (Simon Gikandi, chair; Eric Hayot; Evie Shockley; Vicky Unruh).

10. *Possible Sites for Future International Symposia.* Pursuant to the council's October 2016 decision to hold a second international symposium in 2019 (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 3, May 2017, p. 745), the staff posted on *MLA Commons* a call for letters of interest from potential hosts. The staff reviewed the responses received on the basis of the following criteria: potential interest in the location, including the cultural opportunities and quality of intellectual collaboration; transportation, taking into account costs (both to the city and within the city) and frequency of flights; visa requirements and safety; and the cost and availability of appropriate space, audiovisual equipment, and Internet access in possible meeting venues. This review produced a list of six possible host cities. The staff proposed to do more research on these cities and to ask the potential hosts about their willingness to be considered for a 2021 symposium in addition to the 2019 symposium. The council also asked the staff for information on the cost of certain services (e.g., translation). All the data gathered will be presented to the council in October, at which time the council plans to select sites for the two symposia.

11. *Review of Standing Committees.* The council received the information it had requested in February on the association's standing committees (see *PMLA*, vol. 132, no. 5, Oct. 2017, p. 1276). In addition, the council received a staff report, with recommendations, on the committees that deal with the association's publications (see next item). Council members met in three groups to consider the information on different sets of professional-issues committees. Reports from the three groups were given when the full council reconvened, and the subsequent discussion focused on ways to maximize the committees' effectiveness and bring down meeting costs. Council members explored the following topics: the advantages and disadvantages of holding committee meetings at the MLA office in New York and during the annual convention, the need to identify projects for committees to pursue, holding only project-based committee meetings, the viability of an ad hoc committee model, revising committee charges to clarify the work that is expected, strengthening the role of council advisers, and the need for feedback from the council on annual committee reports. At the conclusion of the discussion, the council decided to change the schedule for committee reports. Starting in 2018, committees will be asked to submit their reports in April for review by the council at its May meeting. The committees

would then be able to consider the council's comments in the fall, at the start of the following committee year. Though council members agreed that the Committee on Scholarly Editions could carry out its charge if it met at the convention, as had been suggested in the staff report on the publications committees, questions remained about the logic and advisability of making this change for only one committee. These questions and the other ideas that the council discussed were referred back to the council's subcommittee (Anne Gere, chair; Angelika Bammer; Brian Croxall; David Palumbo-Liu), which was asked to submit specific proposals and options to the council in October.

12. *Working Group on the Future of the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare.* In the report on the association's publications committees, the staff, responding to concerns that the council had expressed about the sustainability of the variorum project, noted that the Committee on the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare would benefit from an independent study of a number of pressing problems affecting the edition. The staff therefore recommended the creation of a working group charged with helping to ensure the future of the variorum project by establishing partnerships and collaborations and finding funding sources, by identifying new uses of data and appropriate editorial environments, and by revising the *Shakespeare Variorum Handbook* in the light of current technologies. The council established a four-member working group (Matt Cohen, Univ. of Nebraska, Lincoln; Julia H. Flanders, Northeastern Univ.; Alan Galey, Univ. of Toronto; Valerie Wayne, Univ. of Hawai'i, Mānoa) for the term 2017–19.

13. *MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement.* The council selected Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, University Professor and a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University, as the eighth recipient of the association's Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement. The award will be conferred during the 2018 annual convention in New York.

14. *Request from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA).* After considering a question from the CHA about the committee's role in the selection process for the MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement, the council decided to change the process it had established at the May 2008 council meeting (see *PMLA*, vol. 124, no. 1, Jan. 2009, p. 302). Going forward, the council will appoint the members of the MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement Review Committee. The council also charged the review committee with soliciting from members or generating on its own the names of award candidates, developing dossiers for three to five candidates, and submitting the dossiers, either ranked or unranked, to the council for consideration every third year.

15. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2020: 28–29 February, 14–15 May, and 30–31 October.

16. *Committee Appointments.* The council made two committee appointments. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear on the MLA Web site.

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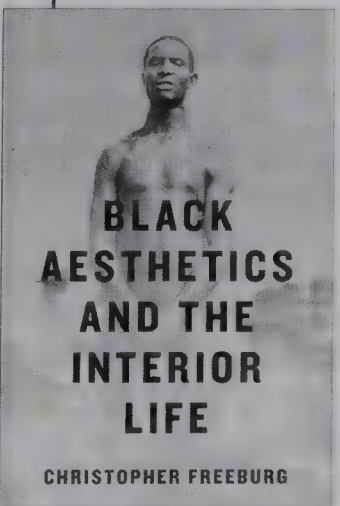
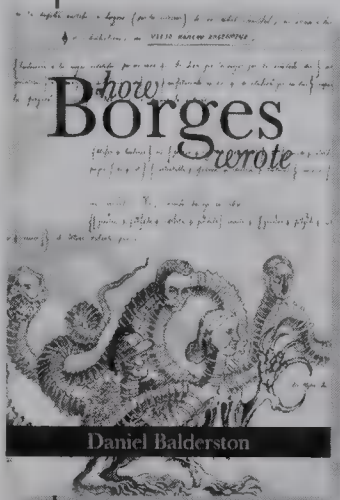
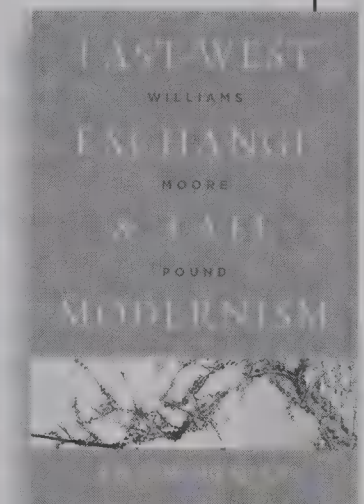
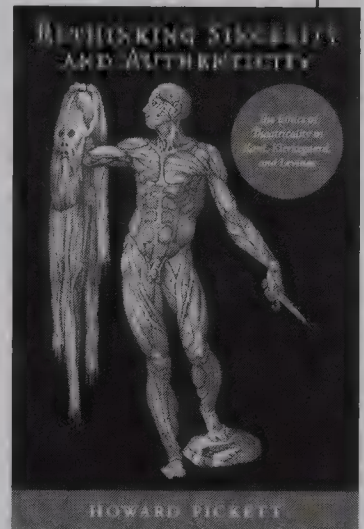
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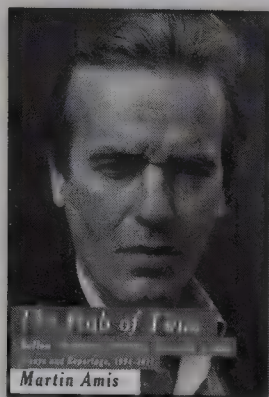


## In Memoriam

John Ashbery, Hudson, NY, 3 September 2017  
 Lawrence Besserman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, 17 July 2017  
 Ruth Elizabeth Burks, Bedford, MA, 13 September 2017  
 Merrel Dare Clubb, Jr., University of Montana, 27 July 2017  
 Robert Thomas Fallon, La Salle University, 9 September 2017  
 Robert F. Fleissner, Springfield, OH, 25 April 2017  
 Doris C. Fraker, Ann Arbor, MI, 27 November 2017  
 Kenneth R. Gros-Louis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 20 October 2017  
 Charles B. Harris, Illinois State University, 31 October 2017  
 Leo A. Hetzler, St. John Fisher College, 18 May 2017  
 Norman Norwood Holland, University of Florida, 28 September 2017  
 Paul Ilie, University of Southern California, 18 July 2017  
 Georgia Kathryn Johnston, St. Louis University, 20 March 2017  
 Ruth M. Kivette, Barnard College, 6 August 2017  
 Audrey Lumsden-Kouvel, University of Illinois, Chicago, 11 August 2017  
 Michele Pickens, Marine Military Academy, TX, 10 July 2017  
 Roger B. Rollin, Clemson University, 10 December 2017  
 Peter Sourian, Bard College, 27 April 2017  
 Patricia H. Stanley, Florida State University, 18 September 2017  
 Stanley Tick, San Francisco State University, 19 December 2017  
 Walter John Wager, State University of New York, Oneonta, 27 November 2017  
 Joyce W. Warren, Queens College, City University of New York, 17 December 2017  
 Louise Rowan Witherell, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, 16 January 2018  
 Philip Yannella, Temple University, 30 March 2017  
 Donald Alfred Yates, Michigan State University, 17 October 2017

This listing contains names received by the membership office since the October 2017 issue. A cumulative list for the academic year 2017–18 appears at the MLA Web site ([www.mla.org/in\\_memoriam](http://www.mla.org/in_memoriam)).

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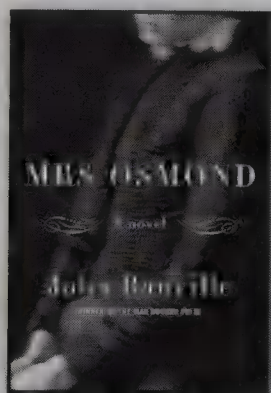


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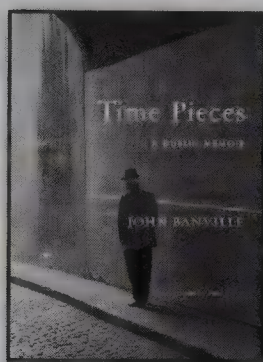


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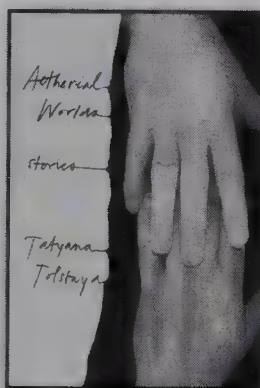


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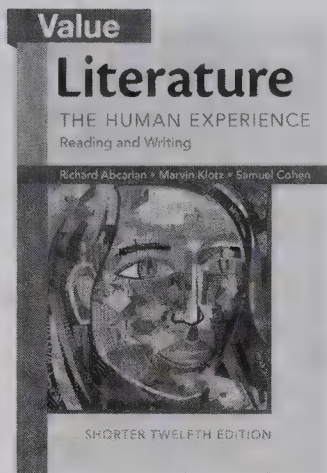
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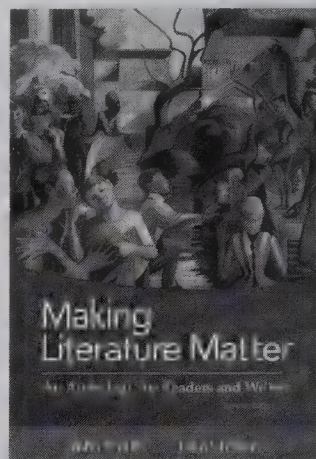
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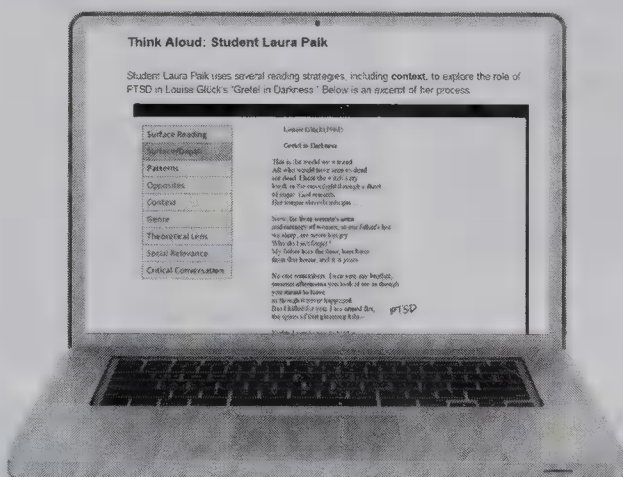


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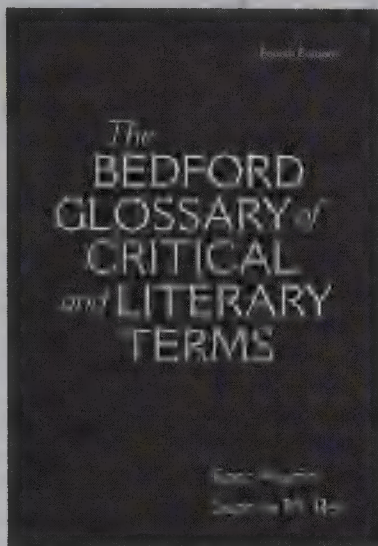
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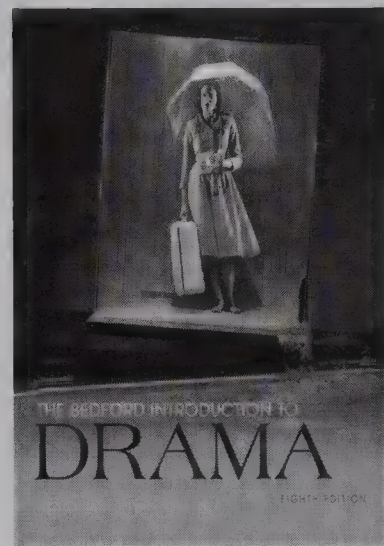
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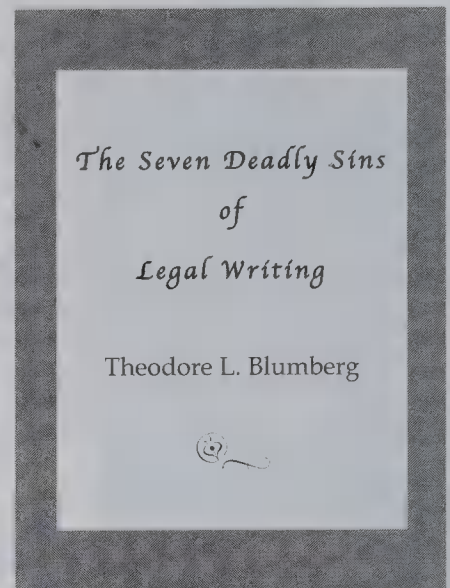
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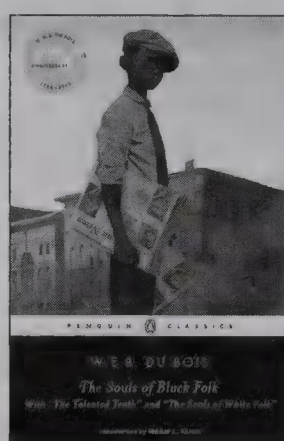
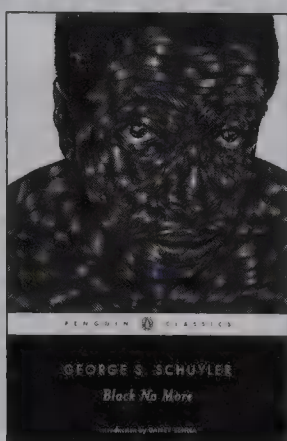
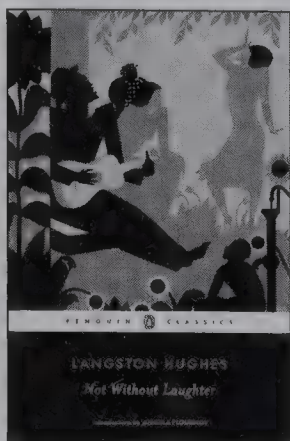
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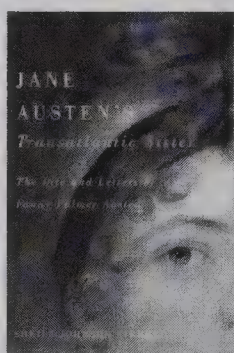
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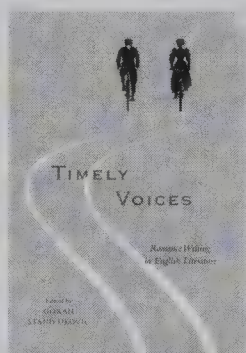


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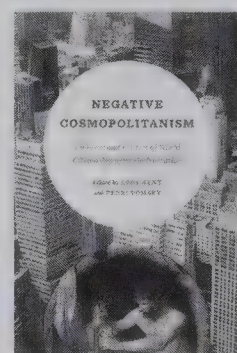


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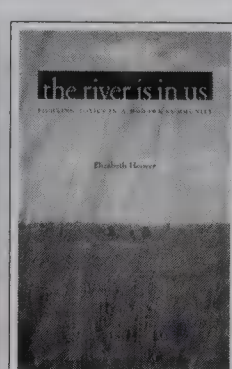
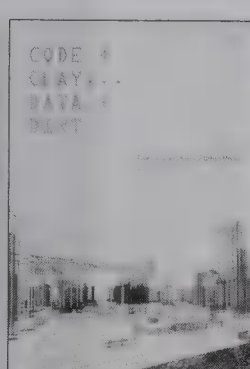
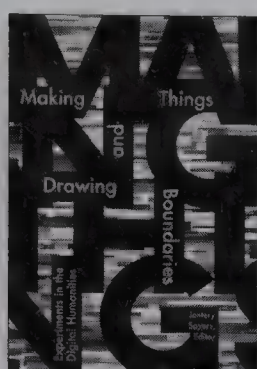
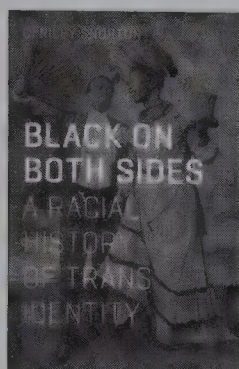
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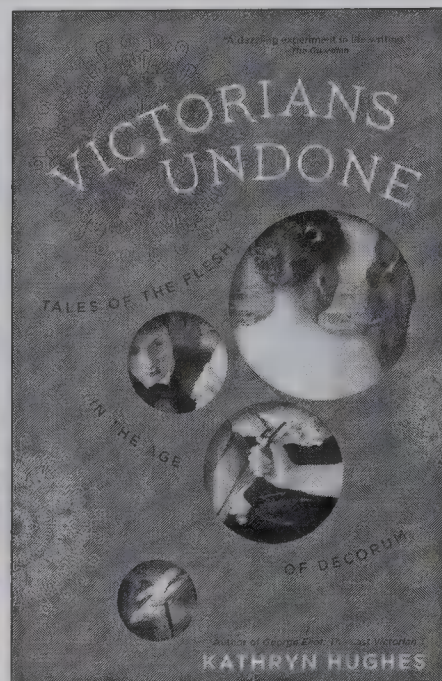
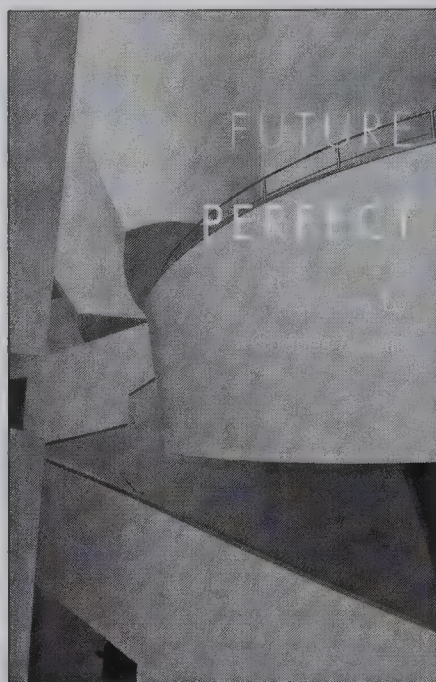
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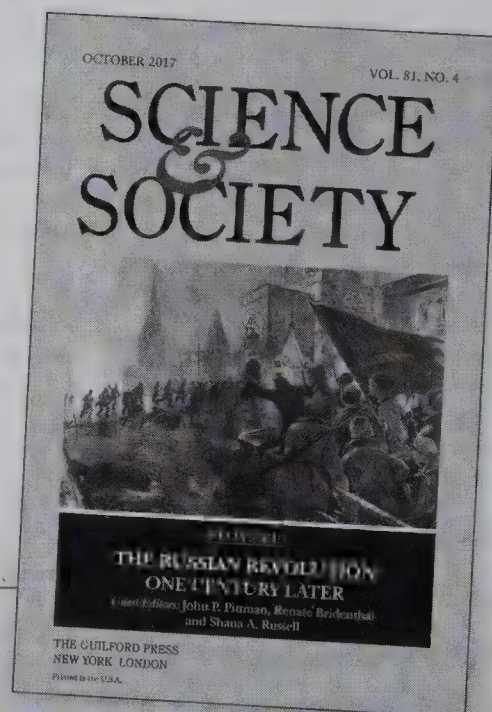
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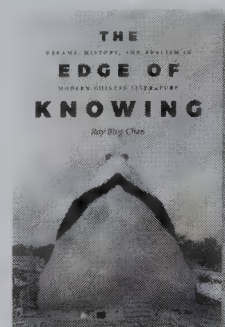
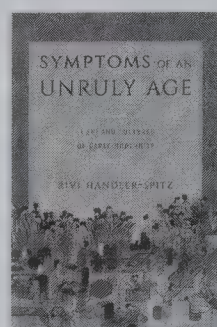
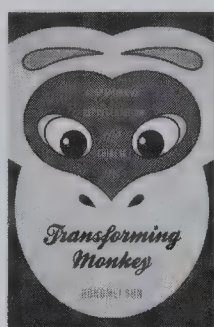
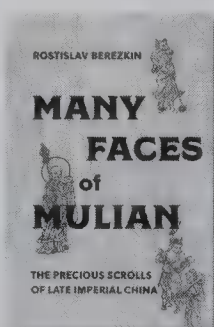
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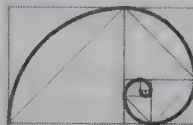
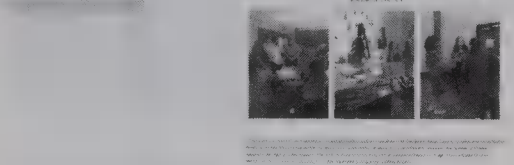
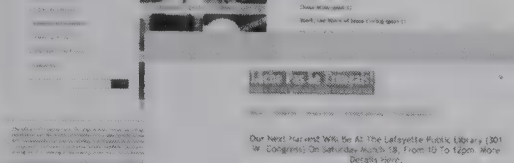
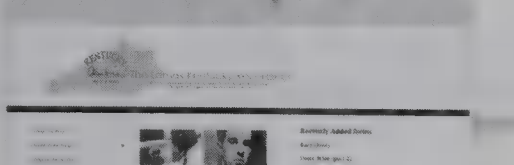
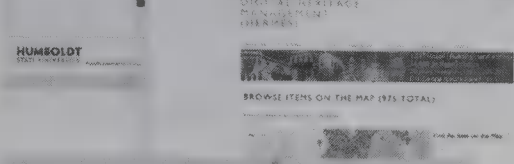
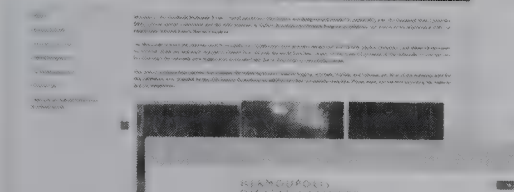
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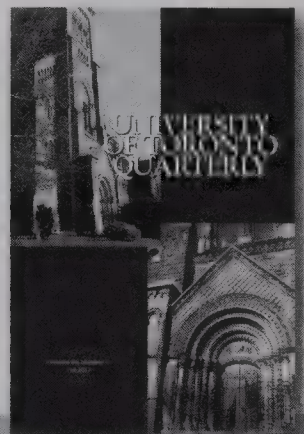
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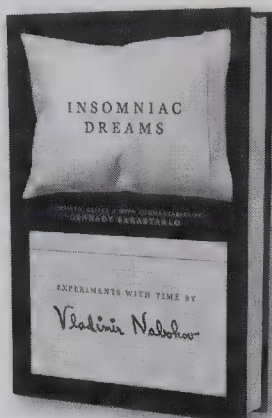
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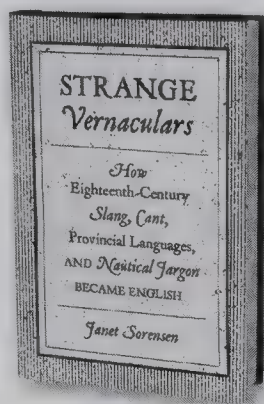
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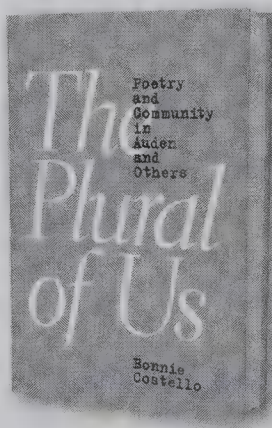
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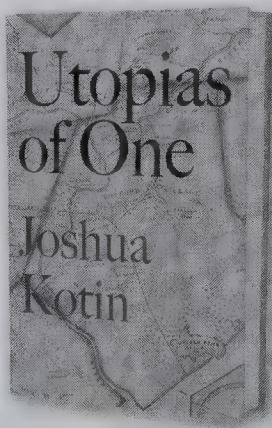
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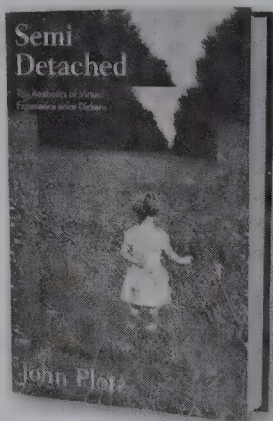
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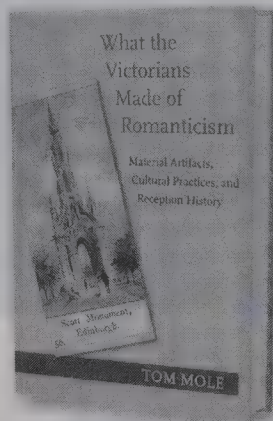
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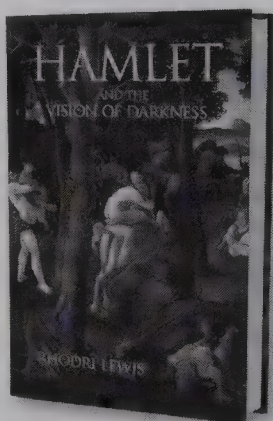
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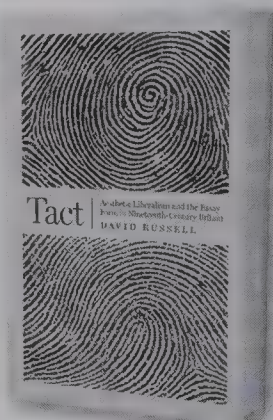
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## Abstracts

19 Joe Moshenska, *Spenser at Play*

Reading *The Faerie Queene* is like playing. This article develops an account of three relevant tendencies of play—to change through time, to animate its object, and to remain opaque in meaning—and distinguishes this account from other critical understandings of play. It then introduces a historical analogue to Spenser's playfulness—the giving of formerly holy objects to children as toys during the Reformation—and uses it as a lens through which to read the ending of the first book of Spenser's poem, where the vast dragon not only becomes a posthumous plaything but also displays surprisingly playful propensities of its own. Readers respond both to this moment and to their own responses to it, playing in the presence of the poem's opaquely foregrounded meanings. (JM)

36 Benjamin A. Saltzman, *Secrecy and the Hermeneutic Potential in Beowulf*

*Beowulf* confronts the limits of knowledge in various forms: the unknowability of death, the secretive behavior of the poem's monsters, the epistemological distance of the past, and our inevitably fragmentary understanding of the poem itself. In the process, the poem also tells us something important about the methods and possibilities that it imagines for the work of discovery and literary interpretation more broadly. Scholars commonly address the poem as a text whose secrets need uncovering, but the poem's engagement with the mechanics of secrecy can be a cue for thinking through our own methods as literary critics in encounters with texts of the past. If we take *Beowulf*'s treatment of secrecy as a guide for the poem's hermeneutic potential, then we find that the poem invites a kind of reading that rigorously, yet humbly, acknowledges how little we can actually know. (BAS)

56 Stephen Hequembourg, *Literally: How to Speak like an Absolute Knave*

A family of Shakespearean characters I call "the perverse literalists" takes the figurative language of their interlocutors in the most literal sense. While they make us laugh, these characters' perversely literal interpretations also highlight the physical and experiential grounds of common figures of speech and prod their interlocutors and the reader into a deeper understanding of the conditions of embodiment. This inventive use of the literal is a trope in its own right, one that has already been useful to cognitive linguists, phenomenologists, and new materialists. Metaphors we consider dead are, as others have suggested, merely sleeping, and the act of waking them up can be not merely funny but profoundly insightful. We should reexamine the widespread aversion to the misuse of *literally* and think instead about what it can tell us about the physicality of such abstract experiences as love and luck, causality and cognition. (SH)

- 71 **Daniel L. Keegan**, *Indigested in the Scenes: Hamlet's Dramatic Theory and Ours*

Discussions of the relation between drama and performance have been dominated by two symmetrical, emancipatory impulses. Performance scholars have, for the past half-century, sought to liberate performance from the authority of the drama. Literary scholars have, for centuries, if not millennia, sought to distinguish a "literary" dimension of the dramatic text free of the flux of performance. This essay diagnoses in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* an alternative story about the relation between drama and performance. Paying refreshed attention to the earlier and less famous of Hamlet's statements of dramatic theory—his blurb for the "excellent play" featuring Aeneas's speech to Dido—I find *Hamlet* bringing drama, especially in its "literary" dimension, crashing back into performance. This collision does not reinstitute the authority of the text; rather, it radically democratizes the scene of dramatic performance by "indigesting" the behaviors of the participants therein. (DLK)

- 88 **Patricia Jane Roylance**, *Winthrop's Journal in Manuscript and Print: The Temporalities of Early-Nineteenth-Century Transmedial Reproduction*

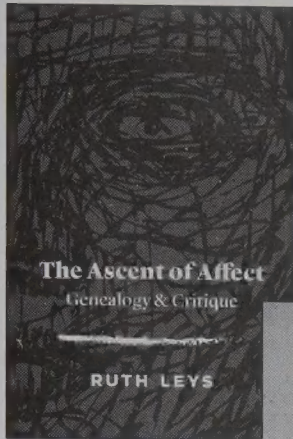
In the early nineteenth century, the antiquarian James Savage produced a print edition of John Winthrop's seventeenth-century manuscript journal. This transmedial reproduction illustrates the differing affordances of print and manuscript as vehicles for connecting to the past. Manuscripts offer a tangible link to long-dead people, but manuscripts' rarity encourages their sequestration in archives. In contrast, print editions make historical content more broadly accessible but provide a less direct material link to earlier eras. Print facsimiles of manuscript, such as the reproduction of Winthrop's handwriting included in Savage's edition, seek to embody the best of both media. But print facsimiles' promise of access to manuscript materiality elides their nature as temporal hybrids and their tendency to distort and damage their originals. The way that nineteenth-century antiquarians negotiated manuscript's and print's temporal affordances and juggled the competing prerogatives of past, present, and future makes those antiquarians useful models for understanding the stakes of digitization projects today. (PJR)

- 107 **Alan Itkin**, *Bring Up the Bodies: The Classical Concept of Poetic Vividness and Its Reevaluation in Holocaust Literature*

The scenario of someone gazing at corpses plays an important role in the work of three authors representing three generations of Holocaust literature: Peter Weiss, W. G. Sebald, and Jonathan Littell. Plato and Aristotle used this scenario to address a key question raised by the concept of poetic vividness, which they defined as putting a described scene before the reader's eyes: If literature shows us gruesome sights that we should not desire to see or enjoy seeing, does this make literature a form of voyeurism? Weiss, Sebald, and Littell evoke corpse gazing in the context of the Holocaust to answer this question and to articulate unique poetic philosophies that respond to the challenge to literature's validity constituted by the Holocaust. The different ways in which they use corpse gazing reveal how Holocaust literature has changed and continues to change as the era of survivor testimony wanes. (AI)

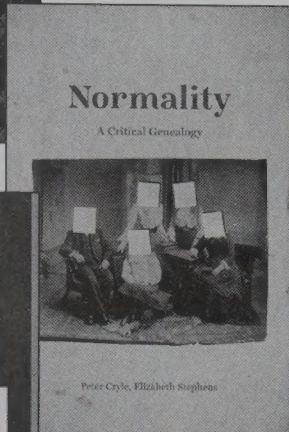
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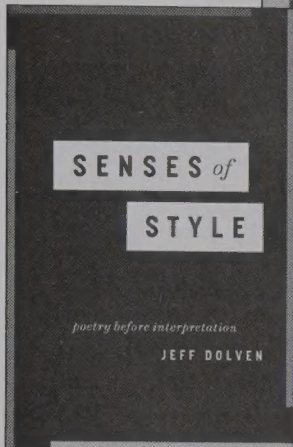


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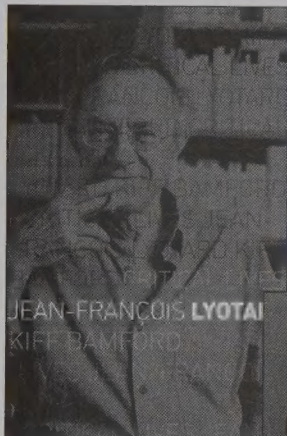
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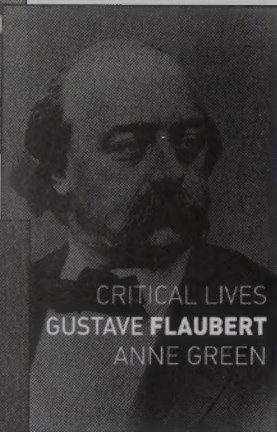


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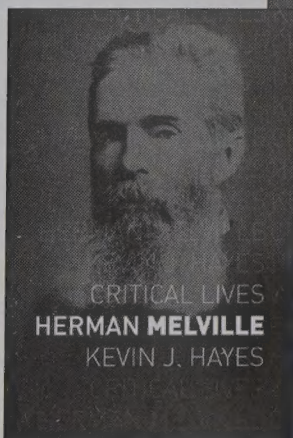


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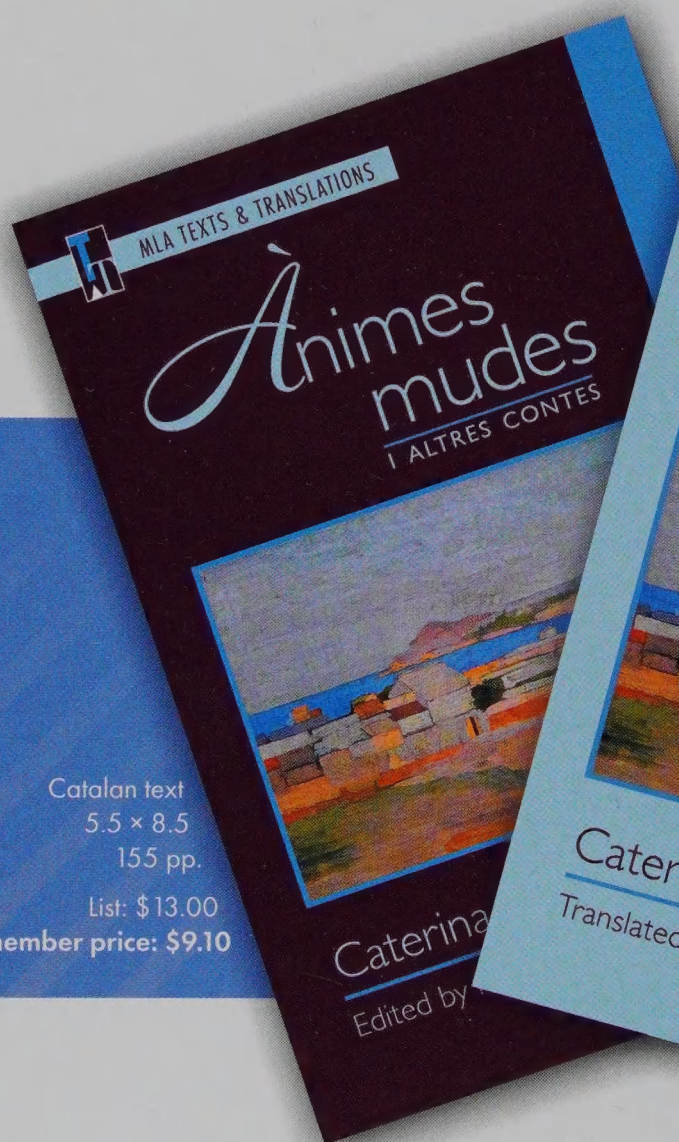




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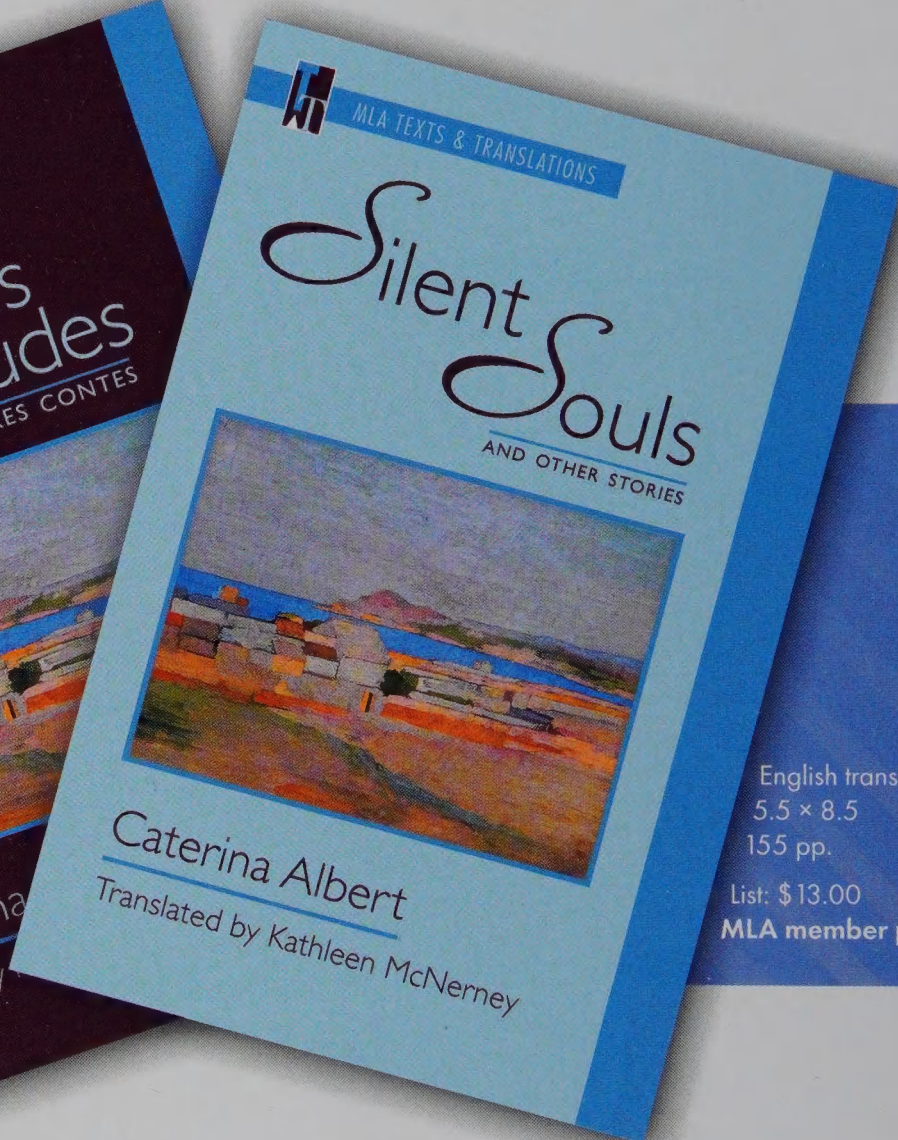


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